

## Jordan Times new telephone numbers

AMMAN (J.T.) — The telephone numbers of the Jordan Press Foundation have been changed. Starting today, the Jordan Times old number 684311 is changed to 5684311, 699634 to 5699634, 603585 to 5603585 and finally 696383 to 5696383. The AJ Ra'i numbers 667171, 607309 (ads fax), 684366 (management fax) and 661242 (editors fax) have been changed to 5667171, 5607309, 5684366 and 5661242 respectively. The AJ Dastour daily also announced that its telephone number 664153 has now been changed to 5664153. The AJ Arab Al Yawm telephone numbers have also changed: The previous telephone exchange number 683333 is now 5683333, the paper's ads department number 70114/5 has become 562114/5, the classified ads 70111/2 became 562111/2, the paper's fax number 602266 became 5612266 and the ads department fax number 702177 became 5622177.

## Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation  
 جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الاردنية. الراي.

## New Global One Telephone Numbers as of February 1st, 1998

	from	to
Sales Office	685 101	569 7777
Customer Service & Main Office	700 301	562 4777
Facsimile	700 328	569 7111
Global Internet Numbers:		
International Internet	700 801	562 0801
	700 901	562 0901
	691 303	562 0099
Local Internet	700 701	562 0701
X.25	686 550	568 6550
SMTP		

Global One

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# U.S. sees Iraqi defiance of U.N. resolutions as 'miscalculation' — King

By Francesca Ciriaci  
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — His Majesty King Hussein said Saturday that the U.S. considers Iraqi defiance of U.N. Security Council resolutions as an extremely serious miscalculation that would lead to an explosion.

The King said the U.S. warned the Iraqi leaders not to "bet on the possibility of a division in the [U.N.] Security Council [that would] prevent the use of force, or... think that the current situation was a bluff or a manoeuvre."

The King said the U.S. assured him that "diplomatic efforts will continue to the last minute, before their failure leads to the use of effective force to stop a country that has previously developed and used weapons of mass destruction, in order to deny it the possibility to use, own, or develop them in the future."

In a letter sent to His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent,

from London, where he is recovering from an infection of the lymph glands, the King said the escalating crisis over weapons inspections between the U.S. and Iraq was the focus of his talks with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright on Friday (See full text of letter on page 7).

In what he described as a "candid and clear conversation," the King and Mrs. Albright also discussed ways and means to break the deadlock in Palestinian-Israeli peace negotiations (See separate story).

"Mrs. Albright has assured me that neither President [Bill Clinton] nor the American administration and people wish to harm our brotherly Iraqi people," the King said in the letter.

He also stressed that the U.S. did not intend to break Iraq's national unity or compromise its territorial integrity.

"But the U.S. and the world cannot allow any party to challenge the inter-



His Majesty King Hussein meets with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright at his United Kingdom residence in Ascot, Friday (Reuters photo)

national will and the U.N. Security Council's resolutions," the King said.

Iraq has maintained that it

is refusing to allow inspectors from the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) access to

presidential palaces for sovereignty and security reasons.

(Continued on page 7)

## King in good health, receiving treatment for lymphatic infection

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein said yesterday in a letter to His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, that he was resting, in good health and receiving medication for the treatment of a lymph gland inflammation.

"I am [here in London] resting, while continuing medical treatment towards full recovery. God willing. As you know, I began treatment several months ago for a micro-organism that has agitated my lymph glands and caused occasional fever, weight loss, fatigue and severe exhaustion

during that period," said King Hussein in his message.

The director of the Royal Medical Services of the Jordanian Armed Forces, Maj. Gen. Yousef Qousus, told Jordan Television last night: "Four months ago, King Hussein complained of high fever, loss of appetite, and sweating associated with enlarged lymphatic glands. To be sure of the diagnosis, a biopsy was taken from the lymph glands in the neck in London. This revealed inflammatory reaction of that gland, and he was given treatment accordingly."

Dr. Qousus added that a

month later, the same symptoms recurred and His Majesty travelled to the Mayo Clinic, where radiological and laboratory tests were conducted. In order to be sure of the diagnosis, a further biopsy was taken from an enlarged lymphatic gland in the armpit, and this revealed the lymph gland to be benign and not at all malignant. It indicated an inflammatory reaction due to a determined bacterial micro-organism, and the King was started on the appropriate medication. His Majesty responded well to the treatment and is in good health.

## Albright assures King: U.S. committed to 'what has been agreed on' between PNA, Israel

As Albright, Netanyahu discuss troop withdrawal, PLO's Executive Committee considers gesture on Israeli demands

Combined agency dispatches

HIS MAJESTY King Hussein on Saturday said that he received assurances from U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright that the U.S. is committed to the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace in the region and the implementation of what has been agreed on between the Palestinians and Israel.

"Rejection of these ideas by any party will make that party be held responsible for obstructing the [peace] process," the King said in a letter he sent yesterday from London to His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent (See full text of letter on page 7).

In an apparent message to the Palestinians, the King said that what is being offered by

the hardline Israeli government is not the end of the road.

"What is not attainable in its entirety at this stage should not be altogether discarded," the King said in his letter.

He said that Mrs. Albright, whom he met in London on Friday, has told him that the U.S. is at this stage "focused on the Palestinian-Israeli dimension" of the peace process and that Washington has forwarded "ideas to both sides that if accepted would move the [peace] process in its right direction."

In the West Bank, the PLO's highest executive body met Saturday to consider a gesture to Israeli demands for changes in its charter ahead of top-level talks with Mrs. Albright, officials said.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat headed the meeting of

the 18-member Executive Committee in the town of Ramallah, where he is to meet Sunday with Ms. Albright.

Committee member Mohammad Nashashibi said the session would "clarify" which clauses have been annulled from the Palestine Liberation Organisation's (PLO) 1968 charter after Israeli demands it be purged of references to the destruction of the Jewish state.

"We will consider the amendments [to the charter] which the Palestine National Council [PNC] decided," Mr. Nashashibi said, referring to the PLO's "parliament."

The committee meeting came as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

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# U.S., U.K. say time approaching for fundamental decision on Iraq crisis

It is vital for us to stop this evil dictator hanging on to his remaining weapons of mass destruction — Blair

Aziz:

Why is this big fuss being created now when there is no immediate nor near danger?

Combined agency dispatches

THE UNITED States said on Saturday time was fast approaching for fundamental decisions on Iraq and that "force is very much on the table" as diplomacy was proving unable to resolve a crisis over arms inspections.

But U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan called for more time to resolve the crisis through diplomacy and Russian President Boris Yeltsin ordered his special envoy to head for Baghdad for the second time in a week in search of a diplomatic solution.

"The window is narrowing... it looks as if diplomacy is not working," U.S.

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright told a news conference in London with British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook.

"Today Foreign Secretary Cook and I agreed that the time is fast approaching for fundamental decisions," Ms. Albright told a news conference. She called the situation very grave.

"We've been at diplomacy now for several months... but no options are closed. It is a statement of fact that the time for diplomacy to work is shorter and shorter," Ms. Albright said.

"It looks as though diplomacy is not working," British Prime Minister Tony Blair branded President Saddam Hussein an evil dictator who must be stopped from terrorising the world with chemical and biological arms.

"We cannot allow Saddam's games and his attempts to divide the [U.N.] Security Council to go on for much longer. If we conclude that the only option to

enforce the Security Council's will is military action, we will not shrink from it," he told a meeting in London of his ruling Labour Party.

"It is vital for us to stop this evil dictator hanging on to his remaining weapons of mass destruction or acquiring more," he said. "We know from experience that

he will not shrink from using them."

The deepening row between Iraq and the U.N. hinges on Baghdad's dispute with inspectors searching for documents and materials related to its weapons programmes.

The inspectors have said they are convinced Iraq,

which has blocked them from eight "presidential sites," is concealing evidence. Iraq says it has no nuclear, chemical or biological weapons or ballistic missiles banned under terms of the cease-fire

(Continued on page 3)

## Cohen confident of use of Gulf bases in case of military action

'Military strikes will be substantial, a great deal more than any pinprick delivered in the past'

WASHINGTON (AFP) — U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen said Saturday he was satisfied that U.S. forces would be able to use air bases in the Gulf if U.S. military action against Iraq becomes necessary.

"We would expect to have the full cooperation of all the countries in the region," Mr. Cohen said when asked if Washington could mount a significant operation without offensive strikes from Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

Mr. Cohen told reporters his discussions with various

Gulf states and with the commander of U.S. forces in the Gulf, U.S. Marine General Anthony Zinni, satisfied him Washington would have the support it needed.

He said he was "not aware of any conditions" on the use of Gulf bases should military strikes become necessary.

"We would expect to have the cooperation of land based facilities as well," he said at a Pentagon news conference.

Mr. Cohen said any U.S. military action would have the objective of crippling

Iraq's ability to reconstitute its weapons of mass destruction or threaten its neighbours.

But he also said the U.S. goal was not to overthrow Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and he sought to play down expectations of the effectiveness of military action.

"There is no military option that I'm aware of that would be an adequate substitute for having human

(Continued on page 7)

## Israel seeks low profile in U.S.-Iraq tensions

TEL AVIV (R) — Israel sought to distance itself from the U.S.-Iraqi standoff ahead of a visit on Saturday by U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

As war clouds gathered over the Gulf, Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai told Israelis to "smile at the rising sun" rather than dredge up memories of the 39 Iraqi missile attacks on Israel during the 1991 Gulf war.

"I don't know how credible the information is about the possibility that Iraq has

biological weapons," Mr. Mordechai said on Israel Radio. "I don't know if they have a launch capability and in general I don't want to see ourselves part of this conflict."

Comments to the New York Times by U.N. chief weapons inspector Richard Butler that Iraq had enough biological material to "blow away Tel Aviv" drew headlines in Israel. He later said his actual comments were "to blow away Tel Aviv, or wherever."

(Continued on page 3)

## Regent reviews escalation of Iraqi crisis with Khatami

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Saturday had a telephone conversation with Iranian President Mohammad Khatami and reviewed with him the dangerous escalation in the crisis between Iraq and the U.N., and extended to the Iranian leader an invitation by His Majesty King Hussein to visit Jordan.

Prince Hassan said that Jordan urges all concerned parties to exert diplomatic efforts towards resolving the dispute between Iraq and the U.N. inspection teams peacefully.

Diplomacy is the most ideal way for settling the issue instead of resorting to the use of force and involving the whole region

in a new cycle of violence and destruction, the Prince told the Iranian president.

The Regent said Jordan will not spare any effort and will maintain all contacts (possible to) help diplomatic endeavours to contain the crisis and save the region from a new catastrophe.

He conveyed to President Khatami greetings from His Majesty King Hussein and an invitation to visit Jordan.

President Khatami, meanwhile, expressed Iran's appreciation of Jordan's leadership and people and commended King Hussein's relentless efforts to solve the region's crises.

He also expressed Iran's satisfaction with Jordan's call for diplomatic dialogue to settle

disputes.

"We have to exert all possible efforts to solve the crisis by peaceful means because any military escalation is bound to complicate matters and aggravate the situation," President Khatami said.

He added that his country will cooperate in this respect with all those concerned including Jordan.

President Khatami requested that the Regent convey his greetings to the King and expressed appreciation of the Regent for his active participation in the meetings of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), which is now chaired by Iran.

## Lebanese army seals off town in search for hardline cleric

BRITEL (R) — The Lebanese army sealed off a village on Saturday in search of fiery anti-Western cleric Sheikh Sobhi Tufaili after routing his forces in clashes in which at least 50 people were killed or wounded.

T-54 tanks and armoured personnel carriers mounted with machine-guns took up positions off the main road to Britel, the home village of Sheikh Tufaili, who led the Hizbollah Islamist group in the 1980s when it was accused of kidnapping Westerners.

Journalists, who had been following events since the Shiite cleric triggered the

violence by seizing a Hizbollah school in nearby Baalbek on Friday, were ordered to leave as the army apparently prepared for a siege. Britel residents were allowed to leave, but no one was allowed to enter the village.

An army statement ordered the closure of all offices in Lebanon run by the sheikh, a veteran political activist who was expelled from Hizbollah (Party of God) a week ago after deepening differences with the group's current, more moderate leadership.

State television said late on Friday there were 50 dead and wounded in the

clashes in Baalbek, 70 km east of Beirut.

A spokesman for Sheikh Tufaili told Reuters at least 18 of his supporters, including three women, had died. The army said after retaking the school at dawn on Saturday they found four bodies inside. A security source told Reuters other dead included an army officer, an army soldier and a civilian woman.

The army said troops had taken up positions on hills overlooking Britel, beside the snow-covered mountains at the eastern edge of the Bekaa Valley, where the

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued on page 7)

## U.N. Interim Force In Lebanon renewed

UNITED NATIONS (R) — The Security Council on Friday approved a six-month renewal until July 31, of the 4,470-member U.N. Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).

The renewal resolution was adopted unanimously, without debate.

UNIFIL now comprises

troops from Fiji, Finland, France, Ghana, Ireland, Italy, Nepal, Norway and Poland. It is commanded by Major General Jioji Konousi Konrote of Fiji.

The force was established in 1978 to restore the Lebanese government's authority over the southern part of the coun-

try after an Israeli incursion against Palestinian guerrillas. Israel withdrew its troops following a later 1982 invasion but retained a so-called security zone along the Lebanese side of the border, aided by its allies of the south Lebanon army militia, to block attacks against northern

Israel. This has resulted in frequent clashes, mainly with Hizbollah guerrillas, and also prevents the deployment of UNIFIL up to the international border. As on previous occasions, the renewal resolution reiterated strong support for the "ter-

ritorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon" within its internationally recognised boundaries. It also condemned all acts of violence committed in particular against the U.N. force and urged the parties to put an end to them.

## Turkey protests to U.N. secretary general over Cyprus air base

UNITED NATIONS (R) — Turkey has protested to the U.N. Secretary General that the opening of an airbase at Paphos, in the south of Cyprus, destabilised the military situation on the island and in the region.

Turkish U.N. representative Huseyin Celim, in a letter circulated on Friday, said the base became operational on Jan. 24 and that the "Greek-Cypriot authorities have publicly declared that combat aircraft from Greece will be deployed on the air base."

"The construction of the military airbase adds a highly destabilising dimension to the military equation in the island and in the region. Moreover, it contravenes various Security Council resolutions calling upon the parties to refrain from any action which would exacerbate the situation," Mr. Celim told U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

Referring to plans by the

Cyprus government to install Russian-made air defence missiles later this year, he said: "Following the decision to deploy S-300 missile systems in southern Cyprus, the construction of the military airbase in Paphos for the stationing of Greek combat aircraft has brought the parties to the threshold of a crisis."

Mr. Celim said Turkey "will not remain indifferent in the face of provocative and hostile actions directed against the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and Turkey."

He said Turkey would "act as a guarantor power, in accordance with its treaty rights and obligations, with a view to protecting the Turkish-Cypriot people and preserving the balance between Turkey and Greece."

Cyprus has been virtually partitioned since 1974 when troops from Turkey took over the north of the island in

response to a coup in Nicosia engineered by the military junta then ruling Greece.

Some 30,000 Turkish troops remain in Cyprus, where in 1983 the Turkish-Cypriots proclaimed their own state that is recognised only by Ankara.

Greece, Turkey and Britain were guarantors of the settlement that resulted in Cypriot independence from Britain in 1960. A government in which Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots were both represented broke apart in 1963.

Mr. Celim called on the secretary-general to "impress upon the Greek/Cypriot-Cypriot camp the importance of desisting from actions which threaten peace and security in Cyprus and in the eastern Mediterranean."

Security Council President Alain Delamater of France told reporters on Friday he had informed council members of meetings he had with

the representatives of Turkey and Cyprus, but gave no further details.

Cypriot U.N. Ambassador Sotos Zachheos sent Mr. Delamater a copy of a statement issued in Nicosia by the government spokesman rejecting Turkish allegations about the Paphos base.

In an accompanying letter, Mr. Zachheos said: "It is our view that the Turkish side, for reasons of their own, is blowing out of all proportions the question of this air base, which will be used only in case of an attack against the Republic of Cyprus."

Mr. Zachheos added: "It is well known that my country, both in 1964 and 1974, was subjected to air strikes by Turkey and 37 per cent of our territory continues to be under Turkish occupation. Cyprus does not have any air force and no decision was taken on the question of stationing aircraft on the Paphos air base."

## Israel seeks to deport Ethiopian Christian

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israel is seeking to deport an Ethiopian Christian who reportedly helped Jews get out of Ethiopia and received Israeli citizenship when a Jewish family falsely claimed him as a relative, officials said Friday.

Dajan Gabara immigrated to Israel in 1991 with his sister and served four months in the Israeli army, Addisu Masala, the only Ethiopian legislator in Israel's Knesset, told the Associated Press.

Mr. Gabara was arrested several weeks ago after the Jewish family that sponsored his immigration turned him in to the interior ministry, Mr. Masala said. Mr. Gabara has been jailed since then, he said.

Interior Ministry spokeswoman Tova Elinson said a deportation warrant was issued for Mr. Gabara after it became clear he had received citizenship on false pretences.

Mr. Masala, who is in the opposition Labour Party, said expelling Gabara would reflect poorly on Israel.

"I say that we are a humane society. A man that causes no harm to the state or society, who works to support himself and served in the army, should be allowed to stay," he said.

Israel is also trying to expel Mr. Gabara's sister, who is in the hospital, Mr. Masala said.

Some 60,000 Ethiopians live in Israel and complaints about discrimination are increasing.

In 1996, the frustration and anger exploded into riots when it was revealed that Israeli blood banks were secretly discarding Ethiopian donations, fearing the blood might be tainted with AIDS.

Almost all the black Jews of Ethiopia came to Israel in two airlifts in 1985 and 1991.



AFTER THE STORM: A Lebanese soldier stops a man at a checkpoint in Baalbek on Saturday, one day after the town was rattled by heavy clashes between supporters of radical Shi'ite cleric Sheikh Sobhi Tufaili and government troops. The Bekaa Valley is a stronghold of the pro-Iranian Hizbollah, which draws inspiration from the imposing poster images of the late Iranian leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (Reuters photo)

## Hundreds of Turkish Cypriots make biggest visit to south since division

NICOSIA (AFP) — More than 1,200 Turkish Cypriots visited the holy Muslim shrine of Hala Sultan Tekke under heavy security Sunday in the largest Turkish Cypriot visit to the government-controlled south of Cyprus since its division in 1974.

The pilgrimage to the shrine near the port city of Larnaca was the latest in a series of humanitarian gestures agreed upon in U.N.-brokered talks between Cypriot President Glafcos Clerides and Turkish-Cypriot leader Rauf Denktaş.

Twenty-four coachloads of Turkish-Cypriots travelled in convoys of four for the visit which was timed to coincide

with the third day of the Muslim festival marking the end of the fasting month of Ramadan.

Greek-Cypriot demonstrators handed out leaflets to the pilgrims at government side of the Leda Palace crossing point on the 180-kilometre long U.N.-patrolled buffer zone which divides the island.

"We want to give the message that we are not enemies with the Turkish-Cypriots," said Aris Hadjipanyiotou, president of the PAK movement which opposes the Turkish troop presence in the northern third of the island since Ankara's 1974 invasion.

"What we want is the Turk-

ish soldiers and settlers to leave Cyprus."

During a previous pilgrimage last April, some Turkish-Cypriots complained of the poor state of repair of the shrine where Muslims believe an aunt of the Prophet Mohammed is buried.

"This time it looks a bit better," said Kemal Asak, 55, who also went on the earlier pilgrimage, although three middle-aged women complained that the carpets in the mosque smelled bad.

The Cyprus government accuses Turkish-Cypriots and the Turkish army of neglecting Christian places of worship in the northern third of

the island and Turkish Cypriots level similar accusations about Muslim places of worship in the government-controlled south.

Greek-Cypriot pilgrims are expected to make a similar visit to the Greek Orthodox monastery of Ayios Andreas at Easter. More than 1,000 made the pilgrimage for the saint's day last November.

Turkey invaded the north of the island in 1974 following a Greek Cypriot coup in Nicosia seeking union with Greece.

Turkish-Cypriots declared a breakaway Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in 1983. It is recognised only by Ankara.

## Egyptian medical team to Iraq

CAIRO (AP) — An Egyptian medical team carrying 215 tonnes of medicine and medical equipment left Cairo on Friday for Iraq, Egypt's Middle East news agency reported.

The agency gave no details on the composition of the team.

Last month, 30 Egyptian celebrities, including movie stars, visited Iraq and delivered

two tonnes of humanitarian aid.

Most Egyptians sympathise with the plight of Iraqi civilians suffering under U.N. economic sanctions. Egypt has opposed the use of force in the current confrontation between the U.S. and Iraq.

Although the U.N. sanctions, imposed after Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, do

not bar the import of medicine or other humanitarian supplies, Iraq has said the embargo has left it without the money to buy needed supplies.

A U.N. oil-for-food deal allows Iraq to pump \$2 billion in oil for six months to buy food and medicine, but Iraq has said the money is not enough to cover its needs.

## Djibouti plane lands at Baghdad airport with gift of food

BAGHDAD (AFP) — A Djibouti plane loaded with food aid landed here Saturday, becoming only the second aircraft to fly into the Iraqi capital since the 1991 Gulf war, the official news agency INA said.

The agency said the aircraft was carrying 25 tonnes of meat as a gift from the people of Djibouti to the sanctions-hit population of Iraq.

Saad Kassem Hammudi, head of the Iraqi parliament's Arab and foreign affairs committee, met two Djibouti officials who flew in with the

cargo and praised the initiative of their country, which is a member of the Arab League.

"We hope this flight will encourage other Arab countries to also show their solidarity with Iraq," Mr. Hammudi told AFP, adding that Egypt, Qatar and Yemen were expected to follow Djibouti's example.

The flight was delayed by several days until it was approved by the U.N. Sanctions Committee. Iraq has been under sweeping sanctions, including an embargo on air traffic, since its August

1990 invasion of Kuwait.

A U.S.-led coalition evicted Iraqi forces from the emirate in the Gulf war of January-February 1991. Since the war, the only way in and out for travellers has been the 950-kilometre road between Baghdad and Amman.

The first plane to arrive at the capital's Saddam International Airport was a Russian medical aid flight on Christmas Day, last Dec. 25, organised by ultra-nationalist leader Vladimir Zhirinovskiy of Russia.

## Turkey defiant in face of European court ruling

ISTANBUL (AFP) — A member of Turkey's ruling coalition on Saturday poured cold water on the banned pro-Islamist Welfare Party's hopes it would be resurrected by the European Court of Human Rights.

Husamettin Cindoruk, leader of the Democratic Turkey Party, said that the Court's condemnation on Friday of Turkey's ban on a pro-communist party in 1990 entailed

nothing more than a fine for Ankara, the Anatolia news agency said.

"Refah will probably get the same," Anatolia quoted Mr. Cindoruk as telling a Turkish audience in Berlin. "At the most, we will be fined by the court," Mr. Cindoruk said.

The European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg ruled Friday that Turkey had violated guarantees on freedom of association enshrined

in the European Convention on Human Rights by banning the United Turkish Communist Party (TBKP) nearly eight years ago.

The TBKP's former president Nihat Sargin and general secretary Nati Yagci were awarded \$19,575 in costs. Ankara dissolved the TBKP in June 1990, just days after it was founded.

Welfare leader Necmettin Erbakan welcomed the court

decision Friday.

"In the case of Refah, the decision will be the same," Mr. Erbakan said, according to Anatolia.

Welfare, the largest party in parliament, was banned on Jan. 16 by Turkey's Constitutional Court.

Mr. Erbakan has already pledged to appeal to Strasbourg over the banning order, which will come into effect with publication in the official state

gazette, expected in February.

Mr. Erbakan became Turkey's first Islamist prime minister in June 1996 after forging a coalition government with a conservative party. But his one-year term was marred by major rows with powerful pro-secular army generals over what they saw as creeping Islamisation.

He was forced to step down under heavy military pressure in June last year.

### JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

#### PROGRAMME TWO

16:10 Cartoon — Pink Panther  
16:30 French Programmes  
18:00 Children's Programme — Skippy  
18:30 Drama — Broder Town  
19:40 Le Journal  
19:15 French Documentary Programme  
19:30 News Headlines  
19:55 America's Funniest Home Video  
20:00 Documentary — Killing for a Living  
21:10 Renegade  
22:00 News in English  
22:30 Best Seller — North and South  
23:15 Comedy — Dad's Army

#### PRAYER TIMES

05:06 Fajr  
06:26 (Sunrise) Duha  
11:49 Dhuhur  
14:57 Asr  
17:13 Maghreb  
18:32 Isha

#### CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifeh. Tel. 810740  
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785.

## JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590

Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.

De la Salle Church Tel. 661757.

Terra Sancta Church Tel. 623666

Anglican Church Tel. 652836.

Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.

Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.

St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.

Amman International Church Tel. 865897.

Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328.

German-speaking Evangelical

Congregation Tel. 688404

The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932.

Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691.

The Evangelical Local Church

in Amman Tel. 811295

English-speaking

Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190.

#### WEATHER

Bulletin, supplied by the Department of Meteorology  
Sunny and fine weather conditions will prevail during the day becoming cool at night with winds easterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will

be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp. Amman 02/13

Aqaba 10/23

Deserts 20/15

Jordan Valley 09/21

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 12, Aqaba 23 Humidity readings: Amman 64 per cent, Aqaba 52 per cent.

#### USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Yahya Abdul Rahim 736072

Dr. Nasser Ibrahim 830432

Dr. Bahjat Bader 832642

Dr. Wafiq Qaddumi 893542

Firas pharmacy 661912

Fardous pharmacy 778336

Al Aserna pharmacy 637055

Nairoukh pharmacy 623672

Al Salam pharmacy 636730

Yacoub pharmacy 644945

Shmeisani pharmacy 637660

Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID: Dr. Ghazi Ta'ameh 250080

Al Quds pharmacy (—)

ZARQA: Dr. Walid Nabhan 995743

Khalifeh pharmacy 98541

#### EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111

Civil Defence Department 661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341

Civil Defence Emergency 199

Rescue Police 192 621111 637777

Fire Brigade 617101

Blood Bank 775121

Highway Police 843402

Traffic Police 896390

Public Security Dept. 630321

Hotel Complaints 605800

Price Complaints 661176

Water & Sewerage Complaints 897467

Amman Municipality Complaints 787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121

Overseas Calls 010230

Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101

Abdali Tel. Repairs 661101

Al Hikma Modern Hospital 773111

Radio Jordan 774111

Water Authority 680100

J. Electricity Authority 815615

Electric Power Co. 636381

RJ Flight Information 44-53300

Queen Alia Int. Airport 44-53300

#### HOSPITALS

AMMAN: Hussein Medical Centre 813813/2

Khalidi Maternity 64241/2

Jabal Amman Maternity 642362

Malhas, J. Amman 636140

Palestine, Shmeisani 607071

Shmeisani Hospital 669131

University Hospital 845845

Al-Muasher Hospital 667227/9

The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37

Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6

Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3

Al-Bashir 775111/26

Army, Marka 891611/5

Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50

Amal Hospital 674155

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199

ZARQA: Zarqa Govt. Hospital 09/983323

Zarqa National Hospital 09/900560

Ibn Sina Hospital 09/986732

Al Hikma Modern Hospital 09/990990

IRBID: Princess Basma Hospital 02/275555

Greek Catholic 02/275555

19:00 Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)

02/27275

Ibn Al Nafes Hospital 02/247100

AQABA: Princess Haya Hospital 03/314111

#### FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44) 53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone (44) (52700)

#### ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

08:05 Larnaca (RJ)

08:25 Bombay (RJ)

08:35 Jeddah (RJ)

09:15 Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)

09:50 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)

10:05 Beirut (RJ)

16:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)



## 'Eid Al Fitr ends, government offices, schools reopen after 4-day holiday

AMMAN (J.T.) — Life in Jordan today returns to normal with government offices, schools, banks and various other businesses re-opening after the four-day holiday of 'Eid Al Fitr, marking the end of the Holy Month of Ramadan.

The feast was observed by religious ceremonies and prayers in the country's different mosques. His Majesty King Hussein performed prayers at Al Hashemite Mosque and later met well-wishers at Raghadan Palace before leaving for London with Her Majesty Queen Noor on a private visit.

During the four-day holiday, Jordan witnessed various incidents that resulted in the death of six people and the injury of 132 others, according to police and Civil Defence Department (CDD) sources.

The incidents also included seven cases of people suffering from respiratory problems and nine cases of food poisoning.



A father and daughter select gifts to celebrate the 'Eid Al Fitr holiday, which marked the end of the Holy Month of Ramadan. (Photo by Nasser Ayyoub)

In one accident, two mini-buses carrying 14 members of two families overturned on University Road, causing some bruises but no serious injuries. The local police said the

accident resulted from slippery road conditions and the drivers losing control of their vehicles.

According to reports from the Public Security Department and the CDD,

the incidents during the 'Eid Al Fitr holiday occurred in several areas and included fires, road accidents, people falling from high places, food poisoning and others.

## Regent conveys greetings to Algerian President Zeroual to mark 'Eid Al Fitr

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, on Friday exchanged good wishes with Algerian President Liamine Zeroual on the occasion of 'Eid Al Fitr and expressed Jordan's solidarity with the Algerian people

in the face of their present ordeal.

The Regent expressed Jordan's keenness on supporting Algeria's efforts to deal with the present situation of violence so that it can resume its active role in the service of Arab and Islamic

causes and build a better life for the Algerian people.

The Algerian president expressed good wishes to the Regent and His Majesty King Hussein and praised the King's efforts towards peace and the establishment of security and stability in

the region.

Prince Hassan also exchanged good wishes with leaders of Arab and Islamic countries on the occasion of 'Eid Al Fitr, which marked the end of the Holy Month of Ramadan.

## Lebanese singer Alameh returns to Beirut following shooting

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Lebanese pop star Ragheb Alameh, who was shot in the leg by a crazed fan early Friday morning near his hotel in Amman, has returned to Beirut on a special plane placed at his disposal by HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent.

Mr. Alameh was treated at Al Khalidi Hospital and King Hussein Medical Centre and was given clearance to travel by his doctor.

Mr. Alameh was shot as he entered the building at around dawn, according to eyewitnesses. The gunman was a fanatical fan who often stalked the singer whenever he was in Amman. Mr. Alameh's brother said, adding he had been arrested after the shooting.

Other sources said the assailant fired four shots at Mr. Alameh but only one bullet hit him in the leg. The source denied that

the incident was connected in any way with the singer's wife, whom he recently divorced.

The singer was performing at the Palace of Culture along with other Arab celebrities in shows sponsored by the Saudi-financed Orbit satellite television station during the three-day 'Eid Al Fitr holiday marking the end of the Holy Month of Ramadan.

In a press conference before he left for Beirut, Mr. Alameh voiced appreciation of Crown Prince Hassan, the Jordanian people and the medical teams, whom he said accorded him care, treatment and hospitality.

Mr. Alameh expressed the view that the attacker must have been drunk, because he was brandishing the gun in the middle of the street and acting in a wild manner.

"If he is a fan, as was rumoured, he should have asked for my autograph rather than firing on me. I

never doubted that he would take a shot at me or might have the intention of killing me," said Mr. Alameh.

"This obsessed person will never prevent me from visiting Jordan again and again," he added.

Mr. Alameh, who thanked Orbit and Jordan Television, which together organised the event in Amman, said that he was grateful for the great care both agencies accorded him before and after the attack.

An official source was quoted by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, as saying that the assailant was one of the pop singer's fans and attended all his performances in Amman four years ago.

Ali Faisal, the doctor who supervised the singer's treatment at Al Khalidi Hospital, reassured the public that he was in very good condition and was walking normally.

The performance, which



Lebanese pop singer Ragheb Alameh talks during a press conference about how he was shot in the leg earlier Friday. Mr. Alameh was allegedly shot by an obsessed fan as he was leaving his hotel (AP photo)

kicked off Thursday, was the third to be organised by Orbit following the success of previous festivals in Dubai in 1996 and in Beirut the following year.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### King receives cables on 'Eid

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein on Saturday received cables from Syrian President Hafez Assad, President of Chad Idris Debi, President of Guyana Janet Jagan and Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri congratulating him on 'Eid Al Fitr. In their cables, they expressed their good wishes to King Hussein and the Jordanian people.

### Queen receives well-wishers

AMMAN (J.T.) — As part of the celebrations of 'Eid Al Fitr, Her Majesty Queen Noor on Thursday welcomed at Basman Palace women community leaders from the country's governorates, representatives of national women's organisations, wives of government officials and members of Noor Al Hussein Foundation.

### Electrical worker injured in Mafrq

AMMAN (J.T.) — An electrician injured after falling from an electricity pole while conducting maintenance work was transferred to Rweishid Hospital in the Mafrq governorate by the Civil Defence Department (CDD) Saturday, according to a CDD statement.

## what's going on

### ARAB MUSIC FESTIVAL

\* Performances by Arab singers Katherin Al Saher and Warda at the Palace of Culture at Al Hussein Sports City at 7:30 p.m. (Sponsored by Orbit Satellite Television and Radio Network in conjunction with Jordan Television)

### FILM

\* French film "La beau mariage" at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh on Monday, Feb. 2, at 6:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.

### EXHIBITIONS

\* "History of Cartoon Drawings" at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh, until Feb. 26.

\* Works by about a hundred artists from Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Lebanon and Jordan at Hamam Art Gallery, Gardens Street, until Feb. 20 (Tel. 5536098).

## Iran to resume flights to Kingdom after 20-year halt — RJ

By Abdul Salam Ghareebah Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN (RJ) — Royal Jordanian (RJ) Vice President for Commercial Affairs Majdi Sabri on Saturday said Iran will resume operating flights to Jordan for the first time in 20 years.

Mr. Sabri recently flew to Tehran to hold talks on operating flights by Iranian airlines to Amman.

He said he expected

that these flights would enhance tourism to religious sites in Jordan and boost the exchange of goods between the Kingdom and Iran after the improvement in bilateral ties following His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan's visit to Iran during the meetings of the Organisation of Islamic Conference.

Mr. Sabri, who was accompanied by RJ Executive Manager for

Marketing and Commercial Agreements Habib Nono, said preliminary talks were held on the sidelines of the annual meetings of the International Air Transport Association (IATA) in Amman last November. At that time, the two sides agreed to start operating flights from Iran to Jordan starting summer 1998.

## U.S. State Department increases cost of visas

AMMAN (J.T.) — The U.S. Information Service (USIS) on Saturday announced that the U.S. State Department is raising fees as of today for consular services, including the application fee for a non-immigrant visa from \$20 to \$45 and the

immigrant visa processing fee from \$200 to \$325.

According to a USIS press release, the fee for the non-immigrant visa is a processing charge and must be paid even if the visa is not issued. However, the actual issuance fee remains unchanged.

Notarial fees have also been increased, it added.

The statement said the fees have been increased worldwide "to ensure that the U.S. State Department recovers the true cost of the work required to perform consular services, as required by law."

## U.S., U.K. say time approaching for fundamental decision on Iraq crisis

(Continued from page 1)

ending the 1991 Gulf war in which U.S.-led forces drove Iraqi troops out of Kuwait.

In an interview shown on BBC World Friday, Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz charged the U.N. inspection teams with exaggerating the current crisis.

"UNSCOM has exaggerated and Mr. Butler [the head of UNSCOM] personally has exaggerated the question of access to presidential and sovereign sites. Since the ceasefire in 1991 there hasn't been any military conflict between Iraq and any of its neighbours. We didn't try to attack, we didn't even threaten any country with any weapon, so where is the danger?" Mr. Aziz said.

"Why is this big fuss being created now when there is no immediate nor near danger?" he asked. The answer, Mr. Aziz said is because: "UNSCOM is totally dominated by the Americans and the British. It's almost an Anglo-Saxon body... it's not international in nature... these people actually implement the policy of their own government. Their policy is to change the leadership of Iraq."

Mr. Aziz said that his country's weapons were destroyed in 1991 and that Iraq had "nothing to hide" in the presidential palaces. He told the BBC that the inspection teams want to "spy" on the Iraqi president's palaces. "It is a provocation against Iraq to create a hostile environment in the Security Council. People are fed up with this policy against Iraq. There are double standards... look at Israel," he said.

U.S. officials, who asked not

to be identified, said on Friday that Washington expected to send extra Stealth fighter planes and perhaps several thousand more troops to the Gulf region because of the escalating crisis.

"We are not sure-rattling. We are at a point now where force is very much on the table," Washington's U.N. Ambassador Bill Richardson said at a gathering of the world's political and business elite in Davos, Switzerland.

Mr. Richardson began a tour of the non-permanent Security Council nations Friday aimed at bolstering a consensus on Iraq.

Mr. Richardson held talks with Swedish Prime Minister Goran Persson and Foreign Minister Lena Hjelm-Wallén on a response to Baghdad's refusal to allow U.N. inspectors full access to its weapons sites.

And the U.S. envoy warned that time is running out for Iraq. "We have been trying for four months. Now we are very close to the military alternative," he said, adding: "Maybe weapon power is the only language [Iraqi President] Saddam Hussein understands."

But Mr. Amman told a news conference in the Swiss resort: "Lots of consultations are going on in various capitals and everyone concerned, including the Americans, have made it clear they would prefer a diplomatic solution."

"Let us give it time. Let us see what happens."

Earlier Mr. Amman said he had agreed in a meeting with Mr. Richardson that diplomacy should take preference over force in resolving the crisis.

Asked whether he had urged

Mr. Richardson to refrain from force in dealing with Iraq, Mr. Amman told reporters in Davos: "I didn't have to urge him because we all agree on that, that preferably we should go the diplomatic route."

Even though the U.S. and Britain seem inclined towards the use of force, Russia and China, also permanent members of the Security Council, put much greater emphasis on diplomacy to avert a military conflict in the world's major oil-producing region.

Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov discussed the Iraqi crisis with Ms. Albright in Madrid on Friday and his government was "a little more patient" than the U.S. in trying to resolve the crisis.

Chinese ambassador to the U.N., Qin Huasun, told reporters after closed-door Security Council consultations on Friday that "China is against the use, or threat of use, of force." He added that Beijing is nevertheless "of the view that Iraq should implement comprehensively and in real earnest the relevant resolutions adopted by the Security Council."

"We call upon parties concerned to exercise restraint and resolve their differences through dialogue and other peaceful means," he said in China's most expansive statement to date on the possibility of a military strike against Iraq.

A Kremlin spokesman said on Saturday Mr. Yeltsin and Mr. Primakov discussed by telephone the need to continue persistent efforts in searching for a political way out of the dead end. Russian envoy Viktor Posolavskiy will travel again to Baghdad today.

(Continued from page 1)

Asked about "foreign reports" that Israel would retaliate with nuclear weapons if Iraq launched a biological attack, Mr. Mordechai told the radio: "I think [the reports] are nonsense."

He said he had spoken by telephone this week to U.S.

Defence Secretary William Cohen who had reiterated "a commitment to Israel's security and defence."

Earlier this week, Israeli Environment Minister Rafi Eitan, a former army chief, said officials were "discussing the possibility" Iraq would use non-conventional weapons against Israel.

Israeli Health Minister

Yehoshua Matza told Israel Radio there was no plan for mass immunisations.

Army Radio said on Saturday Mr. Netanyahu would convene a special meeting after the weekly cabinet session on Sunday to examine Israeli preparedness for an attack by chemical or biological weapons.

The report said Mr.

Mordechai, Mr. Eitan, Mr. Matza and Israeli National Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon would attend.

"We are looking very carefully at events in the Gulf and... if, God forbid, the need arises to take measures we will inform the public well ahead of time what steps should be taken," Mr. Mordechai said.

Mr. Posolavskiy secured one Iraqi concession during his first visit to Baghdad Thursday and is expecting Iraq's response to another Russian proposal when he returns there Sunday, diplomats in the region said.

The Russian deputy foreign minister persuaded Iraqi leaders that they should agree to discuss the issue of access for U.N. weapons inspectors to presidential sites at the beginning of March instead of in April as they were previously insisting, the diplomats said.

Mr. Posolavskiy "secured Iraq's agreement that it will discuss the inspection of presidential sites with Mr. Butler, on his next visit to Baghdad, planned for March 2," one diplomat told AFP Saturday.

Previously Iraq had insisted that it would not discuss the issue until after the U.N. Technical Evaluation Committee had completed their work.

U.S. President Bill Clinton, ending a rollercoaster week in Washington over allegations of sexual misconduct, discussed military options against Iraq with French President Jacques Chirac.

After the two had a 30-minute phone conversation, President Chirac's spokeswoman said the French leader agreed with President Clinton on Iraq and would warn Baghdad of "grave consequences" if it kept up its defiant stand.

Mr. Clinton said the time for a diplomatic solution to the Iraq crisis was "quickly running out."

The White House said it was heartened by what it saw as a tougher French stance against Baghdad after months when Paris opposed the use of force.

The U.S. has said that, with or without international backing, it is ready to attack Iraq with its 30 ships, 300 warplanes and more than 28,000 troops in the Gulf area.

Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral said on Saturday his country would not tolerate a military attack on Iraq, saying it would "jeopardise the peace in

the entire Middle East region where more than 2.5 million Indians live."

Iraq said on Saturday that Mr. Butler was co-ordinating with Israel and the U.S. to build up tension with Baghdad to justify military strikes on Iraq.

A senior government minister and the Al Jumhuriya newspaper both attacked Mr. Butler for saying Iraq had enough dangerous weapons to "blow away Tel Aviv," and said Mr. Butler had actually said "blow away Tel Aviv, or wherever," had made no difference.

Twenty-three U.N. arms experts arrived in Iraq on Saturday for talks on Baghdad's missile warhead production, the first in a series to assess Iraq's progress in dismantling its prohibited weapons, the Iraqi News Agency (INA) said.

In Baghdad, United Nations staff moved into hotels after the Iraqi authorities asked them to leave their private housing for security reasons.

About 300 U.N. staff are working in Baghdad on humanitarian programmes seeking to alleviate the suffering caused by more than seven years of international sanctions imposed for Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Both Ms. Albright and Mr. Cook said their quarrel was with the Iraqi people, not the Iraqi people, and that they were willing to back an expansion of a U.N. programme that permits Baghdad to sell oil for food.

The programme currently allows Iraq to export \$2 billion worth of oil in exchange for food and medicine to relieve the impact on civilians of sanctions imposed after Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Those embargoes cannot be lifted until U.N. inspectors have verified Iraq has no weapons of mass destruction.

Meanwhile, Ms. Albright is expected in Kuwait today, and may discuss sending more American troops to Kuwait, Western diplomats and officers said on Saturday.

## ANNOUNCEMENT

It is with deepfelt regret and sorrow that the Panossian family announces the passing of their beloved

**Alice Karnig Panossian**

whose funeral service will be held at 3 o'clock on Sunday, February 1st, 1998 at the Um Al Heeran Cemetery Church.

Condolences will be accepted for three days at the home of her daughter, Shahan Ledger, located at Al Kursi, near the new General Intelligence headquarters.

May her soul rest in peace



## U.S. blasts Asia's regimes, says China showing more tolerance

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The United States blasted authoritarian regimes across Asia, condemning rulers in Myanmar, Indonesia and Cambodia for human rights abuses, but accepting some improvements in China.

In its annual report on human rights worldwide for 1997 released Friday, the State Department said there was growing tolerance in China, although abuses were widespread and well-documented.

It showed a different tone from last year when Beijing was blasted for crushing dissent. China's repression had not extended into Hong Kong, the former British colony handed back to Beijing in July last year.

Nevertheless the report was strongly critical of China.

"The government continued to commit widespread and well-documented human rights abuses ... (including) torture, and mistreatment of prisoners, forced confessions, and arbitrary arrest and lengthy incommunicado detention."

It also slammed "repressive" policies in Tibet, saying these "risk undermining Tibet's unique cultural, linguistic and religious heritage."

Overall, the report said, 1997 was another year in

which "strong authoritarian governments in many parts of the world kept themselves in power through systematic abuse of the human rights of their citizens. The dismal scenario is all too familiar."

Across the rest of Asia a string of regimes were slammed for rights abuses, repression and corruption.

In Myanmar, formerly Burma, the United States said the ruling military junta had changed its name — from the State Law and Order Restoration Council to the State Peace and Development Council — but not its ways.

"Security forces continued to commit extrajudicial killings, beatings and rape. The Government continued its restrictions on basic rights of free speech, the press, assembly, association and privacy," it said.

The opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) was constantly harassed, with restrictions tightened on its leader Aung San Suu Kyi especially.

In Indonesia the 450,000-strong armed forces were being used primarily to uphold an authoritarian regime, it said.

"Despite a surface adherence to democratic reforms, the Indonesian political system remains strongly authoritarian," the report

said. "Pervasive corruption remains a problem."

The State Department's harsh words are likely to provide ammunition for critics of international efforts to strengthen Indonesia's troubled economy.

East Timor, the troubled former Portuguese colony, again witnessed torture and killings.

"Credible sources confirmed several deaths in detention in East Timor during the year," it said.

Cambodia, which saw one of its two co-prime ministers ousted in a coup last July, took little action against the myriad rights abuses in the country.

"The human rights situation deteriorated markedly during and after the July fighting," when First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh was ousted, it said.

Forces loyal to victorious Second Prime Minister Hun Sen had then launched a "campaign of fear and political intimidation" seeking out supporters of the prince "some of whom they executed and others they detained," it added.

The United States has taken the strongest line of any member of the international community against Phnom Penh, cutting all non-humanitarian aid to

Cambodia and effectively forcing the country's U.N. seat to remain vacant.

The report criticised Vietnam's civil rights record as "still poor", citing limits on freedom of expression, worship and assembly.

"The government continued to repress basic political and some religious freedoms and to commit numerous abuses," it said.

The ruling Communist Party of Vietnam is holding as many as 200 prisoners jailed for dissenting political or religious views.

In Afghanistan, where civil war still reigns following the fall of Kabul to the Taliban Islamic militia in late 1996, law and order is enforced arbitrarily, the report said.

"Political killings, torture, rape, arbitrary detention, looting, abductions and kidnappings for ransom were committed by armed units, local commanders and rogue individuals," it said.

There was also widespread discrimination against women and girls.

The report also highlighted poor human rights records on the Indian subcontinent in Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and in Sri Lanka with extrajudicial killings by security forces in their war against the Tamil Tigers.



Bob Weiner, a spokesman for U.S. President Bill Clinton's drug policy director, shows reporters his subpoena outside U.S. District Court in Washington for testifying before a federal grand jury on the alleged affair between Mr. Clinton and former White House intern Monica Lewinsky. Mr. Weiner described his being subpoenaed by Kenneth Starr as 'Big Brother at its worst.' Mr. Weiner's wife Patricia Berg stands at left (AFP photo)

## U.S. grand jury hears official who exiled Lewinsky

WASHINGTON (R) — A grand jury investigating the President Bill Clinton-Monica Lewinsky sex scandal has questioned the official who banished Ms. Lewinsky from the White House amid a new uproar over prosecutorial tactics.

At the same time, one of the main figures in the scandal levelled a potentially damaging new allegation, saying she was present when Ms. Lewinsky, a former White House intern, received a late-night telephone call from Mr. Clinton.

And in Little Rock, Arkansas, a federal judge ruled that Mr. Clinton's secret service bodyguards cannot be forced to testify in the Paula Jones sexual harassment case. The Lewinsky scandal began after lawyers for Mrs. Jones started digging for evidence to support her claim that Mr. Clinton made crude advances towards her in 1991 when he was Arkansas governor.

Linda Tripp, 48, a former White House secretary who now works for the defence department, helped thrust Ms. Lewinsky into the national spotlight by surreptitiously recording 20 hours of conversation in which Ms. Lewinsky alleged sex play with Mr. Clinton.

In a written statement released by her lawyer, James Moody, Ms. Tripp denied she had any political agenda and denied "vicious personal attacks against me" by an administration that she said was also out to smear Ms. Lewinsky.

"I was present when (Lewinsky) received a late-night phone call from the president. I was present when Monica made and received numerous phone calls which were of a volatile and contentious nature directly related to her relations with the president," Ms. Tripp said in her first public comment.

The Columbia, Maryland, woman did not state when or where the call occurred, and Mr. Moody did not respond to requests to elaborate on his client's allegation against the president.

But Ms. Lewinsky's lawyer William Ginsburg disputed Ms. Tripp's claim. "Based on my investigation of the entire situation, Ms. Tripp was never privy to any conversation that Monica Lewinsky ever had with the president of the United States," he said on the ABC programme "20/20 Friday."

Mr. Clinton has strongly denied that he carried on an illicit affair with Ms. Lewinsky for 18 months and also denies urging the young woman to cover it up by lying under oath to lawyers for Mrs. Jones, as the Lewinsky tapes suggest.

He has yet to explain the nature of his relationship with Ms. Lewinsky, who

was transferred to the Pentagon when senior White House officials noticed her clear infatuation with him.

Independent prosecutor Kenneth Starr has expanded his probe of questionable Clinton business transactions in the 1980s to look into the scandal, which at its core potentially involves corruption of the U.S. justice system, a serious crime.

The Washington Post reported Saturday that the White House was establishing a new office at the Democratic National Committee to help coordinate damage control for Mr. Clinton in the Lewinsky controversy.

The purpose of the operation, which would be paid for with democratic party money, was to share information among Mr. Clinton supporters and rally them to defend Mr. Clinton publicly, the newspaper said.

Ms. Lewinsky's exile was ordered by Evelyn Lieberman, a former deputy White House chief of staff who since last February has been director of the Voice of America.

One government source said Ms. Lieberman found another job for Ms. Lewinsky because she was upset that Ms. Lewinsky was being "flirtatious" and "hanging around the west wing trying to run into Clinton."

"I know of no improper relationship between the president and Monica Lewinsky, or anyone else for that matter," an irritated-looking Lieberman told reporters when she emerged from the grand jury.

Ms. Lieberman underwent questioning after a surprise witness — White House drug policy spokesman Bob Weiner — emerged from a closed-door session with the panel and accused Mr. Starr of conducting a partisan "witch hunt."

Mr. Weiner said he was subpoenaed to testify because of calls he made to a local Democratic Party group in Howard County, Maryland, which has been urging an investigation of Ms. Tripp.

The Democratic group asked a county prosecutor to ascertain if Ms. Tripp violated state law by secretly recording conversations with Ms. Lewinsky. It is illegal to tape a conversation in Maryland without first informing the other person or persons.

Ms. Weiner said his wife used to be an official of the group and that he called its chairman to applaud its action.

Mr. Clinton and his aides continued publicly to ignore the scandal, confident that the initial uproar over events had subsided enough to ease pressure for further information about the president's ties to Ms. Lewinsky.

## UNHCR beefs up security in North Ossetia after kidnap

MOSCOW (AFP) — The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) mission has beefed up security for its staff in North Ossetia following the kidnap of its top official, whose whereabouts remain unknown, a spokesman said Saturday.

"We were in touch with Vladikavkaz this morning, but there have been no new developments," the UNHCR official told AFP, as Russian police continued the hunt for the U.N. refugee agency's top local official, Vincent Cochetel.

The French aid official was abducted at gunpoint Thursday from his home in Vladikavkaz, the capital of North Ossetia, a small republic in Russia's turbulent Caucasus region.

The UNHCR has increased its security measures in Vladikavkaz, and is in close contact with police," said the official, who declined to be named. He did not specify what extra measures had been taken.

Mr. Cochetel, 37, heads the UNHCR mission in Vladikavkaz, where he has been working for 16 months. The UNHCR has six expatriate and 20 local staff in North Ossetia, a Russian republic lying just west of the devastated separatist Russian republic of Chechnya, which has been plagued by kidnappings in recent months.

Friday, French Foreign Ministry spokesman Yves Douthiaux said Paris was in contact with the Russian authorities but

had no further information on Mr. Cochetel. "France does not pay ransoms," the spokesman added.

Vasily Panchenkov, spokesman for the Russian interior ministry troops, said three masked men abducted Mr. Cochetel "after gaining entry to his apartment."

His Nissan vehicle, parked outside the building at the time, was later found in another district of Vladikavkaz.

"During a search of his apartment no traces of blood were found, nor any spent cartridges, or other evidence of a struggle," Mr. Panchenkov told AFP. "It is not ruled out that the French official was kidnapped to obtain a ransom," he added.

Despite a spate of kidnappings in Chechnya and the neighbouring Russian republics of Ingushetia and Dagestan, such incidents have been relatively rare in North Ossetia.

Various Chechen criminal groups are believed to be holding several dozen hostages, including a number of foreign aid workers — five Poles, two Britons and two Hungarians.

Chechnya and the regions on its borders remain unstable, despite a peace deal signed in August 1996 which ended a 21-month war between Russian troops and separatist guerrillas in the breakaway republic.

The republic was left awash with weapons and devastated by the war, in which tens of thousands of civilians were killed.

## International landmine conference opens in Tokyo

TOKYO (AFP) — A two-day international conference on landmines opened here Saturday, seeking more support for mine clearance activities, organisers said.

Some 300 people from 25 countries attended the conference, including Jody Williams, head of the U.S.-based International Campaign to Ban Land Mines, which won last year's Nobel Peace Prize.

The NGO Tokyo Conference 1998 on Anti-Personnel Land Mines was held nearly two months after some 122 states signed a global

treaty banning landmines in Ottawa, Canada.

"Mine clearance organisations with good track records should be supported and given the resources to enable them to plan and operate on a long-term basis," mine victim Chris Moon said during his opening address.

"The vital element of mine clearance is sustainability and empowering local people to solve their own problems," said Mr. Moon who lost his lower leg and right hand to a mine in Mozambique while taking part in landmine sweeping activities.

## Carrying knives new vogue for Japanese teens

TOKYO (AFP) — Police patrolled knife sales shops in a eastern Japan prefecture Saturday, alarmed by a 13-year-old schoolboy's stabbing of his teacher and reports that knife possession was becoming a fashion among teens.

"Following the stabbing incident, we decided to investigate the situations of knife sales to schoolchildren," a spokesman at a police station in Tochigi prefecture said.

Some 30 shops selling knives were being monitored in the area.

Wednesday, the 13-year-old boy stabbed his teacher to death in Tochigi after she scolded him for being late.

The pupil stabbed 26-year-old English teacher

Kayoko Koshizuka seven times with a butterfly knife, which has blades which unfold like butterfly wings.

The attack was the latest in a series of knife assaults that have shocked a society unused to violent crime.

The Tokyo Shimbun said Saturday an increasing number of students take knives to school.

The possession of knives, especially the butterfly type, has become popular partly since male heart-throb Takuya Kimura used one in a television drama last year, the Tokyo daily said.

It also said a boom in camping and other outdoor activities had given a boost to sales of survival and other knives.

## 9 Muslims die as Indian army fires on Eid crowd in Kashmir

JAMMU, India (AFP) — Nine Muslims including a woman and a child were killed when Indian troops fired on protesters in Kashmir on the holy Islamic festival of Eid al-Fitr, a defence spokesman said here Saturday.

The official said the soldiers opened fire on some 30 people in the village of Kadrana, some 200 kilometres north of here, late Friday after the crowd attacked them with stones and tried to stop a search operation.

He said the soldiers had cordoned off the village to arrest two suspected separatist rebels. A congregation in the local mosque offering Eid prayers rushed out and attacked the troops, he said.

The spokesman said three soldiers were injured before the soldiers opened fire, killing five men, one woman and a child and injuring about 10 others. Two men died of injuries later.

The incident led to further protests, with hundreds of people taking to the streets and shouting anti-government slogans, and provoked instant condemnation.

Kashmir Home Minister Ali Mohammed Sagar told AFP Saturday: "It is very sad and unfortunate."

especially as it happened on the holy day of Eid."

An army official expressed "deep anguish" over the "unfortunate incident" and said a high-level inquiry had been ordered into the firing. "Any official found guilty will be punished strictly by military law."

Officials Saturday said security had been tightened and a ban imposed on public gatherings.

More than 20,000 people have died in Muslim separatist violence in Kashmir since 1989.

India accuses neighbouring Pakistan, which administers the northern third of the state, of fuelling the rebellion. Islamabad says its support is limited to diplomacy.

A local resident said the firing was unwarranted. "We were just telling them not to arrest the two boys on Eid," he said.

Reports said the village was tense Saturday, with intermittent clashes between residents and security troops.

A senior police official said 40 people had been injured since Friday. He said army helicopters were sent to the village to fly out the 10 critically injured for medical treatment in the Kashmir winter capital Jammu.

Tension in Kashmir is expected to mount in the run-up to national elections in February-March.

Kashmir's chief Muslim priest, Omar Farooq, Friday called for a boycott of the polls. He told more than 100,000 worshippers the region wanted freedom, not balloting.

A U.S. State Department human rights report released Friday accused Indian security forces of rampant human rights abuses in Kashmir.

The 1997 report said former militants now working for the government may have committed "100 to 200" extrajudicial killings in Kashmir while security forces carried out an equal number of cold-blooded murders.

It said troops also carried out incommunicado detentions and torture. The Indian government rejects the allegations.

Indian paramilitary officials, meanwhile, said they had shot two separatist militant commanders Friday after surrounding a house on the outskirts of Srinagar.

The men, they said, belonged to the Hizbul Mujahideen, one of the most active militant groups fighting for Kashmir to be merged with Pakistan.



Indian security officials display arms and ammunitions recovered from militants belonging to pro-Pakistan group Hizbul Mujahideen in Srinagar's troubled capital Kashmir (AFP photo)

## Chinese dissident calls for major political reforms

BEIJING (AFP) — Outspoken Chinese dissident Qin Yongmin issued an appeal Saturday for major political reforms in China and called on the nation's official political consultative body to assist him.

"We have already had 20 years of economic reform and our economy has become quite strong, so we need to have political reforms to match," Mr. Qin said in a telephone interview from his home in the central city of Wuhan.

"I have written to Li Ruihuan, chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), and asked his permission to attend the annual session in March," he added.

In the letter, Mr. Qin called on the CPPCC to act as an intermediary between the Chinese Communist Party and the people and initiate a three-point reform that moves toward freedom of the press, free trade unions and a multi-party electoral system.

He also called for the CPPCC to be transformed into the Upper House of China's Parliament.

Mr. Qin was first sentenced in 1981 to eight years in a labour camp for taking part in the 1978-79 Democracy Wall movement.

He served a subsequent two-year term in a labour camp for writing a "Peace Charter" with other dissidents in 1994, but has refused to remain silent.

On Dec. 22, Mr. Qin called for the creation of free labour unions within the state sector to help cope with the radical restructuring of unwieldy state enterprises.

Police tried to force him to leave the country, but he resisted and has continued to speak out in favour of a freer society.

On Jan. 29, police in Wuhan detained him for 12 hours after he attempted to board a train to Beijing to see his daughter for the Lunar New Year festival.

In addition to his letter to the CPPCC, Mr. Qin also called on dissidents overseas to drum up support from Chinese communities and organise petitions calling for reforms in the CPPCC.

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### Sonia Gandhi to visit 'family' constituency for poll support

AMETHI, India (AFP) — The Italian-born widow of assassinated Premier Rajiv Gandhi will visit this former constituency of her husband Sunday to garner support for his ailing Congress party in next month's national elections.

Congress officials said the 51-year-old Sonia, would be accompanied by her daughter Priyanka, her son-in-law, and her Britain-based son Rahul, who has not joined her in the campaign trail so far.

The district of Amethi, some 750 kilometres south-east of New Delhi, has been a stronghold of the Gandhi family for nearly 20 years. Rajiv Gandhi was elected from Amethi in elections in 1981, 1984, 1989 and 1991.

The rural constituency of some 1.2 million voters became a model district, with several new factories and a modern railway station. Industrial investment has, however, dwindled in recent years.

Sonia Gandhi decided to campaign for the 112-year-old Congress, in decline after ruling India for around 40 years under such leaders as Rajiv, his mother Indira Gandhi and her father Jawaharlal Nehru.

Many Congress members want Sonia Gandhi to stand in the February-March elections and take over as party leader. She has refused such offers "for now".

Sonia Gandhi will address hundreds of thousands of people at the election rally at a ground where she made her first public speech three years ago to denounce the government for the slope pace of investigations into Rajiv Gandhi's 1991 assassination.

Jamuna Prasad Shukla, a former Congress legislator, said Sonia Gandhi — a familiar face in Amethi due to several house-to-house poll campaigns she undertook for her husband — would not be meeting voters individually.

Mr. Shukla said about 100,000 people were expected to come to the rally.

"There could have been many more but for the short notice with which we are organising this," he said.

The current elections are linked to Gandhi's assassination as the Congress withdrew its key support to the outgoing minority coalition government over its refusal to drop a member party implicated in the killing.

This week an Indian court handed out death sentences to 26 people for Rajiv Gandhi's murder. All the accused were listed as members or sympathisers of Tamil separatist rebels campaigning for an independent state in Sri Lanka.

A powerful behind-the-scenes force in the Congress, Sonia Gandhi shed her reclusive image and launched her election campaign early this month at her husband's murder site in the southern town of Sripurambudur.

The contest in Amethi is a straight fight between former Congress Minister Satish Sharma, a personal choice of Sonia Gandhi, and Sanjay Singh from the dominant Hindu nationalist party.

The Congress claims Mr. Sharma will win easily.

"Satish will win not because the people of Amethi want him to represent them in parliament but because voters here want to keep it for Sonia Gandhi."

"If the Congress were to get a majority in this election, Sonia Gandhi will be prime minister in which case Satish Sharma will have to resign from parliament to enable her to fight elections from here."

"The people of Amethi are eagerly looking forward to that day," he added.



Russian President Boris Yeltsin (right) gestures while speaking with his Ukrainian counterpart Leonid Kuchma during their meeting at the Zavidovo country residence outside Moscow (AFP photo)

### Franco-Russian team prepares to dock with Mir

KOROLYOV, Russia (AFP) — A Russian Soyuz rocket carrying French and Russian cosmonauts was due to dock late Saturday with the orbiting Mir space station, two days after blasting off from Kazakhstan's Baikonur base.

The Soyuz capsule carrying Frenchman Leupold Eyharts and his Russian colleagues Taltat Musabayeva and Nikolai Budarin was due to dock with the ageing Russian space station at 9:13 p.m. (1813 GMT).

A Russian cargo craft undocked from Mir Friday to make way for the new arrivals, whose mission is codenamed Pegasus, officials said at the Korolyov space centre outside Moscow. The Soyuz capsule was launched into a low orbit and has spent the last 48 hours increasing its altitude to link up with Mir, whose orbit varies from 383 kilometres to 393 kilometres above Earth.

Russian space officials opted for the low orbit launch as sending the craft into direct orbit would have demanded a bigger, more expensive rocket. The procedure means by the time of Saturday's link-up Soyuz will have orbited the Earth 34 times since blast off Thursday.

The Soyuz commander, Musabayeva, has regularly fired the craft's motors to adjust its altitude and height in time for the rendez-vous with Mir.

Once the craft is within 50 metres of Mir, Soyuz will begin docking procedures, though Russian space flight control has yet to say whether docking will be carried out manually or automatically.

Throughout the two-day flight to Mir the cosmonauts have been confined in the tiny Soyuz vessel, which comprises a small flight deck the size of a car's front compartment, and a small cabin where the trio can sleep and relax.

Space experts say the two-day wait before docking can be the most arduous, as the crew have little to do but sit and wait and can suffer from "space sickness," which is similar to flight sickness.

Mr. Eyharts will at least have something to keep him occupied — checking whether the salamanders carried aloft by the vessel survived lift-off. He is due to study how they lay eggs in space.

Mir will have a crew of six for three weeks once the Pegasus team join up with Russians Anatoly Solovoyov and Pavel Vinogradov and U.S. astronaut Andrew Thomas, who replaced David Wolf for a four-month stint.

Mr. Eyharts will conduct a series of scientific and medical experiments commissioned by French laboratories, including human biological tests and a study of the effects of zero gravity on salamanders.

It will be the first space flight for the French air force colonel, who underwent months of training at Russia's cosmonaut training centre at Star City, some 40 kilometres outside Moscow.

Mir, already in service for more than 11 years, is to be replaced by the international space station, the first module of which is to be launched on June 30. The joint project involves Russia, the United States, the European Space Agency, Canada and Japan.

## Russia, Ukraine laud new era of cooperation

MOSCOW (R) — Presidents Boris Yeltsin of Russia and Leonid Kuchma of Ukraine Saturday praised a new era in Moscow-Kiev relations and said they wanted cooperation between the two most powerful ex-Soviet states to deepen.

Mr. Yeltsin, who turns 67 Sunday, hosted Mr. Kuchma at his Zavidovocountry residence outside Moscow for two days of informal talks, dubbed by the Kremlin leader a "no necktie" summit.

"The presidents of Russia and Ukraine have no differences over any questions," Interfax news agency quoted Mr. Kuchma as saying before departure from Moscow.

The two leaders said in a statement released by the Kremlin Press service that Russia-Ukrainian ties had "fundamentally" improved following a similar informal summit last November.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union the two Slav states had been at odds over the division of the former Soviet Black Sea fleet, Ukraine's flirting with NATO and the fate of ethnic Russians in Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula.

Kiev has also been irritated by Russia's dominance in the Commonwealth of Independent States, a loose grouping of 12 out of 15 former Soviet republics.

But, under pressure of economic necessities, Mr. Yeltsin and Mr. Kuchma signed a framework friendship treaty last May which opened the way for closer cooperation and agreed in November to scrap value added tax on most goods in bilateral trade.

One of the most sticky issues, Russia's quotas on Ukrainian sugar, has also been resolved. Last year's deal allows Ukraine to export 600,000 tonnes of sugar duty free to Russia this year.

The joint statement said next moves should include boosting mutual investment and cooperation in fuel and energy complex.

It said a wide-ranging economic cooperation programme to the year 2007 should be signed when Mr. Kuchma pays an official visit to Moscow in February.

The document said Russian and Ukrainian experts had worked "productively" in talks with other European states over the Antonov AN-70 cargo plane being jointly developed by the two countries.

Germany is pushing the aircraft as the right model for seven states planning the so-called Future Large Aircraft (FLA) to meet member countries' military transport needs. The FLA countries are Germany, France, Italy, Britain, Spain, Turkey, Belgium and Portugal.

Interfax quoted Mr. Kuchma as saying he and Mr. Yeltsin had resolved the sticky issue of delivering Turkmen gas to Ukraine through Russian territory. He did not give details.

Turkmenistan, keen to reduce its heavy reliance on pipelines belonging to Russia to export its gas, suspended its exports last March due to a row with Moscow over prices and access.

Mr. Kuchma visited Turkmenistan Thursday and signed an agreement with President Saparmurat Niyazov under which Ashgabat is to deliver 20 bcm of Turkmen gas annually to Ukraine until the year 2005.

They also agreed that Turkmenistan would supply 15 bcm to Ukraine this year. They said at the time that the issues of price and transit had still to be resolved.

Mr. Yeltsin and Mr. Kuchma also said there were "unjustified delays" in resolving several issues, such as delimitation of the border and implementation of the agreements over the Black Sea fleet.

The problems also included participation of Russian companies in the privatisation of the oil refining complex in Ukraine and coordinating the policy in arms exports.

The statement expressed vague backing to the CIS and Mr. Kuchma was quoted by Interfax as saying: "This union is needed and its viability depends on us and no one else."

### Tourists filmed white car in Diana crash

LONDON (R) — The Daily Mirror said Saturday it had obtained film shot by two foreign tourists of a speeding white car at the Paris Ritz hotel on the night Princess Diana was killed in a car crash.

The French magistrate investigating the case, Hervé Stephan, told the British tabloid "this is important new evidence into my investigations."

The newspaper said the car captured on video was not a Fiat Uno, the model believed to have been in collision with Diana's chauffeur-driven Mercedes, but almost certainly a Citroën AX. They look similar.

It said the video was shot by two foreign tourists — it did not give their nationality — as they stood outside the hotel on the night Diana and her companion Dodi Fayed were killed with chauffeur Henri Paul.

The couple were said to have been unaware for weeks afterwards of the significance of the film they took on the night of Aug. 31.

The Mirror, which has acquired rights to the video, said it is handing it over to French authorities.

It is said to show the white car screeching away from the side of the road to pursue a decoy car used to dupe photographers. It then spins full circle to join the paparazzi chase and hurtles at speed the wrong way down a one-way street.

The investigating judge has been shown stills from the film. Mr. Stephan told the paper: "I have not yet seen the video myself. I am interested to hear you have seen it."

### Flood in Australia outback claims another life

SYDNEY (R) — Australia poured more troops into the remote outback town of Katherine Saturday to aid clean-up operations after flash floods turned streets into surging rivers and killed at least two people.

Police said the body of an elderly man was found 15 kilometres from Katherine, which is about 300 kilometres south of the northern territory capital of Darwin.

The man was believed to have drowned as floodwaters, triggered by torrential rains, surged into the area.

The first victim of the deluge, an unidentified man believed to be in his fifties, was found Thursday and ABC radio reported the search was still on for a third man who had been swept away.

Most of Katherine, which has been declared a disaster zone, remained under water Saturday.

A river raced through the main street, while residents of outlying areas around the town were left without medical and other emergency aid.

Specialist army personnel were arriving in the town, following other troops who moved in Friday to aid the rescue and clean-up efforts.

More than 1,000 people have been evacuated from their homes, while fears have been high of an outbreak of disease from water contaminated by rubbish and dead animals.

Authorities said they hoped that the floodwaters had peaked and the clean-up could begin in the next few days.

The flooding may be the worst in the area in 40 years.

Acting Sergeant Danny Bacon said it was surprising there were not more deaths.

"Some people expect considerably higher... numbers of deceased during a disaster of this nature," the police officer said.

Katherine's dangers deepened this week as a four metre crocodile was spotted floating down the main street. Other crocodiles were also sighted around flooded properties.

Authorities said the crocodiles had likely been attracted by food washed into the water.

Every year, crocodiles kill several residents of the northern territory, one of Australia's most rugged and remote regions.

### De Klerk's wife 'won't let him go'

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — F.W. De Klerk's wife Markia still loves him and will not give him up, she said in a newspaper interview Saturday as the storm over the former South African president's affair with the wife of a Greek tycoon dominated headlines here.

"I have forgiven my husband, I am his wife and I still love him, we are not planning to get divorced," she told the Saturday Star newspaper.

Meanwhile, Elita Georgiades indicated that she too still loved De Klerk, who admitted their long-time affair in a statement this week.

Asked outside her luxury wine estate in Western Cape province whether she still loved the 61-year-old, she nodded and smiled coyly, according to the newspaper.

In her interview, Marika de Klerk said the couple's 39-year marriage was undergoing tremendous strain. "With everything being written about this it is difficult for us to think straight. Please give us a chance, we are trying to resolve the issue."

She said her husband had stopped speaking to and seeing Mrs. Georgiades about two years ago, but that the relationship had flared again recently.

Mrs. Georgiades' husband Tony said he was deeply saddened by the news.

Marika de Klerk told the newspaper: "That is where we now find ourselves and we (both couples) are now trying to find a solution. But everyone is trying to make me the scapegoat in this affair. I am not the scapegoat, the scapegoat can be found elsewhere."

The de Klerks still share their Pretoria home.

Mr. De Klerk was president until white rule was swept away in a landslide 1994 election victory for President Nelson Mandela's African National Congress. Both men later shared the Nobel Peace Prize.

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Chairman of the Board of Directors:  
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Editor-in-Chief:  
 GEORGE S. HAWATMER

Editorial and advertising offices:  
 Jordan Press Foundation,

University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman, Jordan.  
 Telephone: 568-4311, 5699634, 5667171, 5603585

Facsimile: 5696183

E-mail: jotimes@go.com.jo

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## Running out of patience

HIS MAJESTY King Hussein made clear yesterday in his letter to His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, that the U.S. and the international community are determined to use "effective force" to force Iraq to succumb to the will of the world community and open all its territory for U.N. inspection. This message, which the King wanted made public, was conveyed to the King by U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who has in the past few days been visiting one European capital after the other, and is now in the Middle East, to shore up support for military action in case Iraq continues to defy U.N. resolutions. Despite resistance in the Security Council and in many capitals in the Middle East and the world at large, Washington has declared that it is determined to strike, even unilaterally if needed, to force Iraq to comply with the mandate of the U.N. inspection teams.

President Bill Clinton has repeatedly asserted that his country's problem with Iraq is its defiance of the international community's will over the manner in which the weapons inspection teams should carry out their mandate. The U.N. has demanded that Iraq be stripped of all its nuclear, chemical or biological warfare capabilities. With its nuclear potential removed and chemical power near extinct, Iraq, the U.N. believes, still has some biological weapons stashed away somewhere in its vast territory. The U.N. and the U.S. are therefore determined to see to it that Iraq does not have the potential to threaten any of its neighbours now or in the future. But as the King said and as Prince Hassan and Iranian President Mohammad Khatami agreed, all possible diplomatic efforts must be exerted to ensure a peaceful solution to the current crisis. The dispute with Iraq, which might escalate into a military conflict, has been lingering for months now. Some extra weeks might, therefore, allow for a diplomatic solution. Similar showdowns in the past were resolved at the last minute by diplomatic interventions by either Moscow or Paris. The current standoff, therefore, is not so irreversible as to push the two sides to military confrontation, which risks inflicting heavy losses, especially on innocent Iraqis. While Iraq must comply with all U.N. resolutions, it needs, as British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook said recently, to see light at the end of the tunnel. This position has been adopted by Russia, France and China. We therefore hope that the U.S. and the Security Council give a signal to Baghdad that once any weapons of mass destruction have been removed, it can expect the sanctions to be lifted. The status quo of occasional rise and fall in tensions, with the occasional skirmish, cannot and should not be perpetuated. It is not good for the Iraqi people, for peoples of the Middle East, for world peace and security and, certainly, not for the Iraqi leadership itself.

### ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AL RA'I'S Fahed Fanek Saturday criticised the behaviour of the Jordanian government over the circumstances surrounding the release of Jordanian prisoners from Iraq jails noting that the government had left the task of securing their release to the Jordanian public. The dismay displayed by the government over Laila Shubailat's success in securing the Jordanians' release is unjustified and the government can only blame itself for allowing this to happen, said the writer. The government had learnt that Iraq was ready to set free the prisoners but it failed to despatch an official to finalise an agreement in this regard and accompany the prisoners home, thus leaving the matter to a public figure to carry out this mission, according to the writer. He said it was not because Shubailat is a member of the opposition that Iraq released the prisoners in response to his request since the Iraqi government could have done that anyway in response to any other Jordanian public figure or officials. Furthermore, the writer said, Jordan Television regrettably made heroes out of the released prisoners though it was clear that they were all criminals who had been sentenced to jail terms because of crimes they had committed. He said Shubailat deserves an expression of gratitude and thanks for his efforts to secure the release of the Jordanian prisoners not because the prisoners deserve freedom but for the sake of their families.

Al Ra'i daily Saturday said observers do not expect a positive result from the fresh visit to the Middle East by U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright because the U.S. official is not coming to seek an end to the deadlock but rather to gain support from the countries in the region for U.S. military action against Iraq. The paper's editorial said the U.S. administration had proved impotent in persuading Israel to comply with the requirements of peace and the implementation of the peace accords during the recent Washington meetings between the leaders of the U.S., Israel and the Palestinians, and no one is expecting to see any breakthrough as a result of Albright's visit to Israel. As long as the U.S. administration is focusing on Iraq and as long as it is not concerned with exerting any pressure on Israel to abide by the peace accords, there can be no hope for an end to the present deadlocked situation in the region, said the paper.

## Sunday's Economic Pulse

# The unmaking of the Tigers' miracle

THE ECONOMIC miracle which earned the states of Southeast Asia a good reputation and labelled them as "Tigers" proved to be unfounded, and turned out to be an air bubble. The false miracle was suddenly transformed into a disaster that threatens not only the countries concerned but also the global economy as a whole.

In Jordan, our memory is still vivid regarding the cooked up statistics which our official institutions used to come up with during the late seventies and the eighties indicating that the Jordanian economy was perfectly well, and the external indebtedness was very low. A Central Bank report asserted that debt service does not cost more than 6 per cent of exports. The fact was completely different but was not unravelled until the crisis was upon us and each official claimed he did not know.

Something like that but at a larger scale took place in the Asian "Tigers." Their official statistics which were accepted by the World Bank and reproduced by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were cooked up. It has now been revealed that the real external indebtedness is around five times the previous figures. Korea for instance used to say that its external debt amounts

to \$30 billion. It turned out to be \$155 billion. Indonesia, the oil producing tiger, is believed to be indebted in the order of \$135 billion, which were allegedly expropriated by the Suharto family over 30 years of corrupt rule. They have now submitted to the IMF conditions to bail out their bankrupt country provided the companies of the president's sons and daughters which used to enjoy a monopoly over all government projects at exaggerated prices be dissolved.

On the other hand, the population of the Southeast Asian countries behaved like rich people and lived above the means of their economies. Both the government and the private sector lived in abundance thanks to borrowed funds which must be repaid with interest, and foreign financial investments ready to escape at the first sign of trouble.

The crisis in Southeast Asia is not local or limited, it threatens the world economy. The exports of industrial and developing countries to the markets of the previous tigers may be slashed in half. Outstanding investments lost most of their value. The current value of the Indonesian currency is below one sixth of what it used to be one year ago. More important, many international

banks are deeply involved in loans extended to these countries which are now labelled as bad debts.

When the Third World indebtedness crisis erupted 15 years ago, the volume of all developing countries' debts was around \$750 billion. The international banking system needed 10 years to emerge from the crisis though with lots of wounds and casualties. The Tigers' debt is initially estimated at one trillion dollars (\$1000 billion). We should not be surprised to hear about major banks going bankrupt. Among the banks heavily involved in the Far Eastern fiasco are German, French, American, and other banks including some Arab banks and Arab investors.

We have to draw lessons from this bitter experience. It is evident now that it is not safe to conduct economic development based on external borrowing. Financial markets could not be stable in the long run if based on foreign investors. All the easy ways to achieve a false prosperity will end up in disaster. The real investments should be financed to the greatest extent possible by domestic savings. Last but not least, there is no future for countries managed by corrupt rulers who take liberty with public funds.

Dr. Fahed Fanek

## Jordanian Perspective

# Butler was to have made a difference in Iraq

WHEN SWEDISH diplomat Rolf Ekeus bowed out as head of the U.N. team in charge of eliminating Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and Australia's Richard Butler took his place in July, hopes were raised that the Iraqi arms file was on its way to be sealed after six years of haggling and disputes.

The departure from the scene of Ekeus was long overdue if only because it has become clear that very little in terms of real movement could be expected regarding an end to the Iraq crisis as long as Ekeus headed the team of U.N. inspectors.

The net assumption when Butler took over was: With a new face replacing Ekeus as head of the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) in charge of eliminating Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, the door was now open to turn a new leaf in seeking an end to the crippling international sanctions against Iraq.

Initial comments by Butler, that he was committed to doing a technically perfect job and to "open a new chapter with Iraq" and assurances that he would not venture into the dangerous political aspects of the imbroglio were music to the ears of those who sincerely wanted to see an end to the suffering of the Iraqi people.

But, in the five months since then, Iraq's relations with the U.N. have not only plummeted but also hit an all-time low, and Butler's assurances have been proved hollow. If that was not enough, massive damage has been caused in the way of UNSCOM fulfilling its mandate.

While we could perhaps interpret and

understand Iraqi tactics and gimmicks as a desperate way to ensure that its both political as well as humanitarian cases remain hitting the headlines which in the end would generate enough pressure to be used at the proper time to influence world public opinion the way the Russian foreign minister said: "We are more patient" and to maintain the Iraq issue very much in international focus, we are surprised at the behaviour and comments of Butler.

**There could not have been any mistaking the undertone of what Butler said... It was as if he was willing the U.S. to launch military strikes against Iraq to shore up the UNSCOM's status and prove that the Special Commission that he heads was not a paper tiger.**

First signs that the Australian disarmament expert was allowing Iraqi rhetoric to get to him came when he, in television interviews, publicly referred to the massing of American forces in the Gulf in the wake of the stand-off with Iraq in November and the withdrawal of all UNSCOM officials from Iraq for a short period. There could not have been any mistaking the undertone of what Butler said then. It was as if he was willing the U.S. to launch military strikes against Iraq to shore up the UNSCOM's status and prove that the Special Commission that he heads was not a paper tiger. Many who believed

him, to make it a personal vendetta and shoot off assertions like Iraq has ready missile heads loaded with biological weapons. Nor is it acceptable that he would use the media as a forum to propagate his assertion. If indeed the assertion was true, then why did he not report the matter to the U.N. Security Council, which hired him in the first place? And what, if we may ask — regardless of the accuracy of the assertion — was his place to declare that Iraq posed a direct threat to Israel? At a press conference immediately after his last visit to Baghdad, Butler declined comment to a pointed question on a

similar assertion by the British Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, that Iraq was producing enough nerve gas every week to fill missile warheads. Well, that would have been perhaps understandable if his report to the Security Council two days later did contain the charge. No, we have to wait until Butler decides that he needed a prestigious medium like the New York Times to announce not only that Iraq had biological weapons ready for delivery but also that the missiles could "blow away Tel Aviv."

If that was not enough, he also told American leaders that 45 Iraqi warheads were unaccounted for in another gesture that perhaps indicates malice. What is Butler trying to do? Start another war by provoking simultaneous American and Israeli military strikes against Iraq? cannot but agree with the French observation that this was not what emerged from UNSCOM reports and Butler could be overstepping his prerogatives. One thing is clear: The episode has cast dark shadows over Butler's continued role as head of the Special Commission. We could see Washington and London fighting tooth and nail at any suggestion in the Security Council that Butler be kicked out as UNSCOM head — beyond everything their argument would be that replacing Butler would be placating Iraq and little consideration be given to Butler's folly of choosing to fight what appears to be a personal vendetta against Iraq.

But then it is up to the other three members of the all-too-powerful council to prevail themselves.

# If it were Al Gore's Middle East

By Gwynne Dyer

IF THIS were a Victorian melodrama or a Russian novel, we would now have reached the point where one of the fallen hero's closest friends (Al Gore?) walks in, places a loaded revolver on the table, and tells him to do "the honourable thing." But even if Bill Clinton resigns, will it make much difference to the world?

It would give President Gore three years to establish himself in his own right before seeking re-election in November, 2000. He could not achieve much in domestic policy because he would still face a hostile Congress (unless there is a miracle in this year's congressional elections), but foreign policy would be wide open.

**The steep fall in American influence since [the Gulf war] is mostly due to Clinton's paralysis on the core issue of an Israeli-Palestinian peace settlement.**

Right now, the White House's political influence abroad is at a fifty-year low. Post-cold war Europe has less need of American help, and Asia, in the midst of a terrifying financial crisis, pays more attention to American money-men than American politicians.

Washington's own short attention span for African and Latin American issues (about 10 minutes) limits its role there.

But the Middle East is different. It is less important than any of the other regions in terms of population, wealth, and resources, but the close American links to Israel plus the long-running psychodrama with Iraq and Iran give the Middle East a huge emotional importance in domestic American politics. This is where Gore could make a real splash.

At the end of the Gulf war in 1991, the United States was the sole and undisputed great power in the whole region, with huge influence in every state except Iran. The steep fall in American influence since then is mostly due to Clinton's paralysis on the core issue of an Israeli-Palestinian peace settlement. If Gore were to take a different line on that, it could all come back very fast.

Gore's first post-Clinton decision would not be on Arab-Israeli affairs, however, but on Iraq.

At the moment it's all still bluff and bluster. "There'll be one final round of diplomacy, and then an ultimatum, and then we act," said a U.S. National Security Council official on 24 January, predicting an early military strike against Iraq. Getting into the spirit of the occasion, the Iraqi newspaper "Babel" (owned by Saddam Hussein's son Uday) replied: "To turn attention away from his personal scandal, it is not far-fetched that Clinton would undertake a military stupidity against Iraq."

And sure enough, there was Bill Clinton on television last week warning Americans: "Think how many people can be killed by just a tiny bit of anthrax...It's not just that Saddam might put it on a Scud and send it to the city he



Al Gore

wants to destroy. Think about all the terrorists and other bad actors who could parade through Baghdad and pick up their stores if we don't take action."

If you can't win the argument,

**...could Gore do what Clinton never dared, and bring real political pressure on Israel to honour its agreement with the Palestinians?**

change the subject. But an attack on Iraq is now such an obvious diversion, so heavily discounted in advance, that it is unlikely to happen under Clinton. "Zippergate" protects Saddam Hussein. Whereas Al Gore could order the same strikes against Iraq and reap enormous political credit domestically. Nor would he necessarily pay a big price elsewhere.

At the moment, a U.S. strike against Saddam Hussein's "presidential compounds", the eight sites containing hundreds of

buildings that Saddam has declared off-limits to United Nations inspection teams seeking his biological weapons production and storage facilities, would meet with almost universal condemnation.

China, Russia and France would far rather end sanctions against Iraq and do lucrative business deals with the Iraqi regime: they have consistently argued against using military force against Saddam on the U.N. Security Council. The Arab World is so frustrated by America's failure to hold Israel to its commitments under the Oslo peace accords that it would erupt in fury if U.S. forces attacked a fellow Arab state, even deeply unpopular Iraq.

But if a newly elevated Al Gore ordered the same strikes, and accompanied them with hints of a harder line against Israel and a

More importantly, could Gore do what Clinton never dared, and bring real political pressure on Israel to honour its agreement with the Palestinians? Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is so brazenly contemptuous of Clinton that he spent most of his recent visit to the U.S. patronising extreme right-wing talks shows that have made a career of slandering the beleaguered president, but it was never clear if Clinton's timidity was wholly rational.

Most American Jews vote, and most of them vote Democratic, so it is certainly important for a Democratic presidential candidate not to alienate them. Increasingly, the Political Action Committees (PAC) and other fund-raising bodies within the Jewish community have come under the influence of hard-line ultra-Zionists who back Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu all the way, and they scared the pants off Clinton.

But there is a gulf between these PACs and mainstream opinion among American Jews, which is deeply concerned about where Netanyahu's militant policies are taking Israel. An adroit political operator could exploit that gulf to fashion a new American strategy in the Middle East, and build himself an impressive reputation as a peacemaker in the process.

There is some doubt whether Al Gore could be that man: "adroit political operator" is not the phrase that springs to mind when his name comes up. But Bill Clinton's early departure from the scene would change everything in the Middle East — and the first person to feel the effect of the change would certainly be Saddam Hussein.



AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein on Saturday sent a message to His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent. Following is the full translation of the King's message:

*In the name of God, the most merciful, the most compassionate*

*My dear brother, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent,*

I have given considerable thought to the discussion I had last night with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright during the visit she paid me in London, where I am resting while continuing medical treatment towards total recovery, God willing.

As you know, I began treatment several months ago for a micro-organism that has agitated my lymph glands and caused occasional fever, weight loss, fatigue and severe exhaustion during that period. This has been the reason for my recent travels to Britain and the Mayo Clinic in the United States, where the problem was finally identified and medication was started immediately to eliminate it and its effects, God willing.

As for yesterday's meeting, it was frank and clear in terms of the dimensions we tackled, namely the peace process and the difficult circumstances it is going through, and the Iraq crisis.

Regarding the former, Mrs. Albright conveyed to me the determination of the U.S. president and administration to continue their work and efforts with the aim of attaining a just

## King's letter to Regent

comprehensive and lasting peace, and to concentrate at this stage on the Palestinian-Israeli dimension.

She also informed me that the United States presented both sides with ideas, the acceptance of which will move the process in the right direction, supported by a U.S. commitment to live up to its guarantees to what has been previously agreed to. However, rejection of these ideas by any party will render that party responsible for obstructing the process.

It was made clear that what is not attainable in its entirety at this stage should not be altogether discarded, and that what is being currently offered is not the end of the road but rather a step on the way towards the ultimate objective.

As for Iraq, Mrs. Albright has assured me that neither the president nor the American administration and people wish to harm our brotherly Iraqi people. On the contrary, they all sympathize with their suffering and are seeking ways of reducing and ending it.

She said they support the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq, but that the United States and the world cannot allow any party to challenge the international will and the resolutions of the Security Council and to refuse strict compliance with them, particularly in such a situation which is dependent on diplomacy and the cooperation of the Security Council members and the international community to solve the crisis. This will continue to the last minute before its failure leads

to the use of effective force to stop a country that has previously developed and used weapons of mass destruction, in order to deny it the possibility to use, own, or develop them in the future.

They believe that the leadership of that country will be making an extremely serious miscalculation if they are betting on the possibility of a division in the Security Council in a manner that might prevent the use of force, or if they think that the current situation is a bluff or a manoeuvre, and that stubbornness in responding to the Security Council's demands will not bear fruit but rather, would move the situation towards an explosion — May God forbid — in the aforementioned manner. I remembered my last meeting with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein before the Gulf war and after his occupation of brotherly Kuwait. I also recalled the Arab summit meetings which preceded that catastrophe and in which the president of Iraq continuously emphasised the need for commitment by all Arabs not to use force against each other and for commitment by all Arabs to military action against any Arab country that violates this agreement.

I remembered the letter I sent on my return from my trip to the Arab Maghreb countries in which I warned, offered advice, and expressed fear, not only over the future of Iraq but also for the future of the entire Arab Nation if the situation was not resolved before the expected explosion took place.

After this letter, his last words while bidding me farewell at the airport were: "The entire universe is against us and God is with us. Victory will be ours, so don't worry and don't trouble yourself."

My response was "Thank you. I shall return to my country feeling sad, worried and full of sorrow. What I have heard is beyond my ability to deal with. Should you need my help in something good and worthwhile, I shall be in Amman."

The catastrophe occurred and the entire nation suffered, and God knows how much we too suffered as a result of the suffering of the brotherly Iraqi people.

We never ceased to try and offer earnest advice to the Iraqi leadership all to no avail. We have worked diligently, still do, and will continue to work to alleviate the suffering of the victimised (Iraqi) people as a foremost priority.

My dear brother,

It is my wish that you broadcast this letter for all to hear so that our conscience can be relieved, and in order to do our duty out of fear for our nation and for the dear Iraqi people, and not in any way in an attempt to scare people. We are very much part of this nation and we will continue to hope for the best. I know already that there will be those who will criticise and others who will boast, but I do not hide anything from my people for I know that doing nothing is futile and that doing all that is good for people shall remain on earth.

## U.S. sees Iraqi defiance of U.N. resolutions as 'miscalculation' leading to 'explosion' — King

(Continued from page 1)

The U.S. has repeatedly wanted that unless Iraq cooperates fully with UNSCOM, a military action could be taken to force Baghdad to back down.

According to a report published Friday by the London-based Arabic daily Al Hayat, Baghdad has already been informed through Cuba of the main features of a U.S. military plan against it.

Recalling that in 1990 Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz had been informed in advance by then-U.S. Secretary of State James Baker of the main points of Desert Storm, Al Hayat said that the U.S. military plan for a future strike against Iraq comprises three stages: a four-day attack on Saddam Hussein's power, a four-day attack on the presidential palaces, and the landing of special forces in strategically important areas.

Here at home, earlier on Friday, officials called on all concerned parties to use diplomacy rather than force to solve the escalating tension between the U.S. and Iraq.

Stressing that Jordan was looking with deep concern at developments of the stand-off over Iraqi weapons inspections, Minister of Foreign Affairs Fayez Tarawneh reiterated that the Kingdom adheres to the principle of settling disputes by peaceful means, dialogue and negotiations, rather than using the language of destruction and confrontation.

In a statement to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, Dr. Tarawneh said Jordan believed in the right of all nations to live in peace and security.

"We call on all concerned parties in the dispute to pursue diplomatic efforts towards the implementation of U.N. Security Council resolutions so that international legitimacy can be respected," Petra quoted Dr. Tarawneh as saying.

He added that the implementation of U.N. resolutions should mean that all forms of sanctions imposed on the Iraqi people should end, Petra said.

Jordan has long urged an end to the suffering of the Iraqi people, crushed by a U.N. embargo imposed after the 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

According to Petra, the minister of foreign affairs also expressed hope that efforts will continue to avoid confrontation.

Deputy Prime Minister for Development Affairs and Minister of State for Prime Ministry Affairs Jawad Anani was quoted Friday by Reuters news agency as stressing that Jordan's economy would be severely threatened should the U.S. launch a military attack on Baghdad.

Pointing out that the Kingdom sustained heavy economic losses and faced a demographic crisis following the second Gulf war, Dr. Anani was quoted as saying that "once again, Jordan will become the victim if Iraq is hit."

Jordan opened its borders to thousands of Iraqis who fled their country as a result of the 1990-1991 crisis.

The Kingdom is still home to many of them.

Under an annual "oil-for-food" deal, which was renewed at the end of last year, Iraq promised to sell 4.8 million tonnes of oil and oil products to Jordan this year at the reduced price of \$16.8 per barrel.

The agreement also stipulates that Iraq will provide the Kingdom with \$300 million in oil supplies in payment for an old debt.

## Lebanese army seals off town in search for hardline cleric

(Continued from page 1)

sheikh was thought to be holed up after fleeing the school in Baalbek. The Syrian border lies on the other side of the low mountains.

An army statement said Sheikh Tufaili and his followers faced charges of endangering the country, killing soldiers and civilians and forming an armed group — a serious crime in light of the 1975-90 civil war.

The army warned residents of the region to stay indoors and said anyone carrying weapons would be arrested.

Hizbollah, a Shiite Islamist group that runs charities and has a military arm fighting Israeli occupation troops in south Lebanon, expelled the sheikh on the grounds he was seeking to split the party.

Khodr Tays, a former Hizbollah parliamentary deputy who was Sheikh Tufaili's right-hand man, died in the fighting, said a Reuters correspondent who saw the body. Mr. Tays was also from Beirut and residents vowed vengeance.

Sheikh Tufaili led Hizbollah at the end of Lebanon's turbulent 1980s, when Western governments said it directed shadowy groups that carried out kidnappings and attacked foreign targets, including a 1983 suicide bombing that killed 241 U.S. servicemen.

Hizbollah's stronghold of the Bekaa Valley is known for everything from illegal drug cultivation to some of the world's most feared guerrilla groups. Syria, the major power broker in Lebanon, has based many of its estimated 35,000 troops in the country in the Bekaa Valley.

Syrian and Lebanese army officers had tried to mediate after hundreds of Hizbollah fighters surrounded the school taken by Sheikh Tufaili's men. After fighting erupted, Hizbollah's spiritual leader, Sheikh Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah, also appealed for dialogue.

Sheikh Tufaili, 49, had warned of dire consequences if his dispute with Hizbollah was not resolved, suggesting that bloody clashes between Shiite groups could resume as in the civil war.

The sheikh, who stirs passions with fiery anti-Western speeches, re-entered the political arena last year by launching a "hunger revolt" to press the government into easing poverty. The Bekaa is home to many Shiites, the largest but poorest sect in Lebanon.

Sobhi Tufaili, a bespectacled sheikh with piercing eyes and a white turban, escaped a death sentence by a Lebanese military tribunal for a 1983 ambush on a convoy in which the commander of the army's first brigade and several other soldiers were killed.

U.S. committed to 'what has been agreed on' between PNA, Israel

(Continued from page 1)

met in Jerusalem with Ms. Albright to hear proposals for an Israeli troop withdrawal from the West Bank in a U.S. bid to break the 10-month deadlock in the peace process.

Mr. Netanyahu insists the Palestinians specify which clauses have been expunged from the charter as one of a long list of preconditions he says they must fulfil before he conducts the promised troop pullback.

The PNC made a general decision in April 1996 annulling all clauses from the charter which contradicted the peace process.

That move satisfied then Prime Minister Shimon Peres, but Mr. Netanyahu has insisted on a more specific decision.

In a bid to meet Israeli demands, President Arafat presented U.S. President Bill Clinton in a Jan. 22 meeting with a list of specific clauses which had been annulled.

But Mr. Netanyahu's government said President Arafat's word was not enough and demanded the 669-member PNC be convened again to confirm the list.

Committee member Asaad Abdul Rahman told journalists before the session in Ramallah that "holding another session of the PNC to cancel the clauses is not possible. This is just an excuse by Netanyahu to hold up the peace process."

Instead, the Executive Committee, which is elected by the PNC and groups all the factions of the PLO, "will confirm and clarify the PNC decision," Mr. Abdul Rahman said.

Seventeen members of the Executive Committee attended the session, since Farouk Kaddoumi, considered the second highest PLO official, remains in Tunis after his rejection of President Arafat's self-rule deals with Israel.

Ahead of Ms. Albright's meetings with the two sides, President Clinton sent greetings to Mr. Arafat for the holidays marking the end of the Holy Month of Ramadan and adding his wishes for progress in the peace process.

"I hope this year will see progress towards a complete and just peace in the Middle East. The United States stands by you and your Israeli partners in reaching peace," President Clinton said in the message, quoted by the Palestinian news agency Wafa.

Aside from the preconditions which Mr. Netanyahu has placed on the troop withdrawal, which the Palestinians have largely rejected, the two sides remain far apart over the scope of the West Bank pullback.

The Palestinians have rejected a Netanyahu proposal for a troop withdrawal from 12 per cent of the West Bank conditional on the cancelling of another pullback due later this year.

Meanwhile, Palestinian youths and Israeli soldiers clashed for the second day running Saturday in the West Bank town of Bethlehem, leaving two Palestinian policemen injured, witnesses said.

Around 40 youths threw stones at soldiers, who responded with teargas and rubber-coated bullets, near a Jewish religious site on the edge of the Bethlehem self-rule area, the witnesses said.

The two Palestinian policemen were lightly injured by Israeli rubber coated bullets as they tried to hold some youths back from joining the protest, which broke up soon after.

On Friday clashes broke out at the same site after the funeral of a Palestinian youth who died while in an Israeli prison on Thursday.

Israeli police said Nidal Zakaria Abu Suror, 18, who was arrested on car theft charges on Jan. 16, tried to hang himself in his cell and, after 12 days in a coma, died Thursday.

Police said Abu Suror told fellow inmates he feared that his wife, a Palestinian living in Canada, would learn of his arrest and become despondent and attempted suicide when police refused to release him.

But Abu Suror's father, Zachariya, said his son was not married and held police responsible for his death. "He would never have committed suicide," he said.

Israeli police officials said Friday that an internal investigation and an autopsy performed Friday morning had confirmed that Abu Suror died of injuries suffered when he tried to hang himself.

They said a representative of the Palestinian National Authority was present during the autopsy.

## Egypt slams Butler; Turkey to review stance on air bases

(Continued from page 1)

States to refrain from launching a military strike against Iraq.

He also blamed Mr. Butler for contributing to reigniting the crisis between Baghdad and Washington by making "unfortunate" statements in which he was quoted as saying Iraq could wipe out Tel Aviv with missiles carrying biological weapons.

"The statements Butler made were not warranted [and] prompt us to question his method of working. If Iraqi missiles can hit Tel Aviv then they can also hit Egypt," Mr. Musa said.

"That is why the situation which Butler spoke of is not true because he introduced a new element [Israel] which does not help the situation but adds to the problem," Mr.

Musa said.

Meanwhile, Turkey's government, reluctant to open its airbases for a U.S. air strike against Iraq, will review its stance on the eve of the visit of a senior U.S. general in Ankara on Monday, Turkish press reports said Saturday.

Turkish Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz will meet with Chief of Staff General Ismail Hakkı Karadayi, Deputy Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit and officials of the foreign ministry on Sunday to consider steps to be taken by Turkey in the event of a U.S. strike against Iraq, the Anatolian news agency reported.

The meeting would make a new evaluation of the situation, the daily Sabah said.

The vice chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, U.S. Air Force General Joseph R. Bolton, is due in Ankara on Monday.

Turkey's Deputy Premier Bulent Ecevit had said after a meeting with Mr. Yilmaz on Friday that Ankara would not allow the United States to use an allied airbase in the country's south for air raids against neighbouring Iraq.

"No Turkish contribution should be expected to any military operation in our region [against Iraq] that is not approved by Turkey," Mr. Ecevit said in a written statement.

But the daily Hurriyet on Saturday pointed out that the statement was printed on the letterhead of Mr. Ecevit's Democratic Left Party and not on official government stationery.

Mr. Ecevit had surprised Mr. Yilmaz by announcing his intention to issue a written statement on the subject, Hurriyet said.

Mr. Yilmaz, while ruling out an active role in a strike against Iraq and voicing reservations about a "passive participation" in remarks made after the meeting on Friday, did not expressly preclude the opening of Incirlik air base in Turkey's south for U.S. air raids against neighbouring Iraq.

Mr. Yilmaz said Turkey had not received a request by the United States.

"There is no question of this so far, but we view it as a possibility," he said, referring to a possible request.

Hurriyet interpreted Mr. Ecevit's move as an attempt to commit the government to his position.

"Ecevit's message to the U.S. is: If the U.S. uses the Incirlik base [for strikes against Iraq], this could lead to a government crisis in Turkey," Hurriyet said.

## The Saturday Crossword

WHY I NEVER MARRIED

By FRANCIS HANSEN, Metuchen, New Jersey

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## Zero Asia growth set to hurt global expansion

## Leading U.S. economist warns that next global disturbance would likely be a plunge in the dollar

DAVOS, Switzerland (AFP) — Asia is on track for zero growth this year which could severely damage global expansion prospects, a leading U.S. economist warned here Thursday.

Fred Bergsten, director of the Institute for International Economists, also warned in a paper that the next major global disturbance would likely be a plunge in the dollar.

"Growth in Asia as a whole could drop to or near zero in 1998 and 1999 (and possibly beyond)," he said in a speech, pointing out that the region has accounted for almost one half of all world growth throughout the 1990s.

Brazil and Russia would also probably post no growth, in part because adjustment actions they were forced to take to avoid even greater contagion from the shock events in Asia.

"Global prospects must therefore be scaled back sharply as a result of the Asian crisis," Mr. Bergsten said.

The major exception was China, where "growth should remain solidly positive," he said.

Mr. Bergsten made his remarks as the Asian turmoil took centre stage at the first day of the World Eco-

nomics Forum in this Swiss ski resort, where 2,000 top political and business chiefs are gathered.

While the short-term fundamentals continued to favour the dollar — due to the strength of the U.S. economy compared to that of Japan and Europe — the long-term outlook was "increasingly negative," he said.

Asia's huge regional currency depreciations would feed Asian exports, leading to an increase of the U.S. trade deficit of \$100 billion in real terms, to around \$250-\$350 billion in 1998-1999, he said.

The U.S. net debt, which has already passed one trillion dollars, will shortly exceed \$1.5 trillion.

Mr. Bergsten said the dollar was currently overvalued, in trade terms, by about 15-20 per cent.

One possible trigger point for a dollar plunge would be a sharp slowdown in the U.S. economy, particularly if accompanied by a stock market meltdown and a reduction in short-term rates by the Federal Reserve.

"There are strong reasons to believe that the next move by the Federal Reserve in the United States will be on the downside," he said.

The other catalyst could be the creation of the euro.

"The euro will almost certainly attract substantial portfolio diversification early in its existence. This could bring the reversal of the dollar that must ultimately occur within the time horizon (1998-2000).

In the trade arena, Japan posed the "biggest problem," the economist said.

Japan should be reducing its trade surplus substantially rather than increasing it, by importing, for example, an additional \$100 billion worth of products from Asia.

However, the prospects for a Japanese shift in policy on anything like the scale needed seem remote, he said.

U.S. financier George Soros called Saturday for a new international mechanism to regulate financial markets, saying existing international financial institutions cannot cope.

Representatives of major international institutions attending the forum at this upmarket Swiss ski resort said, however, that instead of setting up new institutions, the current ones should become more flexible and work more closely with each other and with the private sector.

Economically advanced countries have set up elaborate systems to maintain stability in their financial markets, "but we don't have adequate international arrangements and that is where the problem is," Mr. Soros told the World Economic Forum annual meeting here.

Without the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the Bank for International Settlements, "this system would have fallen apart already," he said, but they are no longer able to cope with the problems of the financial markets.

"We should go back to the drawing board" and draw up a new Bretton Woods agreement, he said, referring to the agreement that set up the World Bank and IMF after World War II.

World Bank Managing Director Sven Sandstrom said however that "we already have a rather full and extensive system of international organisations."

"The challenge is to make these organisations work much more effectively and efficiently, and not to create new institutions," he added.

International Monetary Fund Deputy Managing Director Stanley Fischer meanwhile said that while

"there is a need for a single surveillance of the international market and trading system, that surveillance takes place to a considerable extent now through the IMF."

OECD Secretary General Donald Johnston defended the job done by the IMF and World Bank over the past 50 years, saying that while they had been criticised in some quarters for their handling of the Asian crisis, nobody should forget that they have had "a remarkably good record" over their half a decade of existence.

He said there is no need for new international institutions, but there is a need to find "ways to make them more adaptable" and to achieve more coordination between the various bodies.

"I am very optimistic about the ability of these institutions to adapt," Mr. Johnston said.

The representatives of the international institutions agreed, however, that their organisations needed to open up more to each other and to the outside world.

"We can no longer have a situation where major global decisions are taken by a small group, whether it is the Group of Seven, or whatever," U.N. Secretary General

Kofi Annan said.

World Trade Organisation Director General Renato Ruggiero called for moves to "improve communication and coordination between the international institutions," while Mr. Fischer said "we need to find ways of bringing in the private sector to share the burden of dealing with a panic."

European Commission vice-president Leon Brittan agreed that the international community needed to reconsider the whole issue and build up a consensus on what needed to be done.

But in the short term "one of the most useful things the world community could do is offer practical assistance in the task of bank supervision ... to the countries in Asia that have fallen down on that task," he said.

Brazilian President Fernando Cardoso welcomed the fact that regulating the financial markets is now firmly on the international agenda. "A new Bretton Woods ... including some elements of transparency and regulation, is necessary," he said, but not necessarily in the form of a new international regulatory body.

## Israeli economy seen weathering cut in U.S. aid

TEL AVIV (R) — The Israeli economy can accommodate a gradual elimination of the \$1.2 billion it receives annually in U.S. civilian aid, economists and analysts said.

"In the past there was a justification for aid, (but) Israel has jumped from being a developing and emerging market to being a high-income economy," said Jonathan Katz, chief economist at Solid Financial Markets.

"Israel can raise money abroad if it needs to."

Finance Minister Yacov Neeman presented in Washington last week his proposal to phase out the economic portion of U.S. aid over 10-12 years.

Under the proposal, half of the civilian aid, or \$600 million, would be transferred to Israel's U.S. military aid

account. Israel currently receives \$1.8 billion in military assistance from the United States.

Over the next two months, Mr. Neeman will work out details of the reduction. The U.S. House Appropriations Committee will study the plan as it develops the foreign aid budget for fiscal 1999, which starts on Oct. 1.

Some analysts suggested Mr. Neeman initiated the proposal to offset political tensions between Israel and the United States over the stalled peace process.

"No one knows anything officially, but this comes at a time when there's a particularly unfavourable attitude in Washington (towards) Israel," said Amotz Asa AL, associate editor of the Jerusalem Post.

Despite speculation about

political motivations, the timing is also right from an economic point of view, Mr. Asa AL said.

"Israel's share in America's foreign aid is disproportionate (to its size and the problems it's facing).

Washington's foreign aid budget totals \$13 billion.

U.S. aid has helped offset Israel's trade deficit, which totalled \$7.9 billion in 1997. However, a slow cut in aid would not affect Israel's fiscal health, economists believe.

"About \$1 billion of the aid Israel receives goes to the Israeli economy, that \$1 billion can be extracted with relative ease from Israel's \$100 billion gross domestic product if it is done over the next five years," Mr. Asa AL said.

## Jordan, EU to sign 'framework convention' for implementing financial, technical cooperation

AMMAN (I.T.) — The European Union and Jordan will Monday sign the framework convention governing the implementation of financial and technical cooperation under the MEDA Programme — the community's main financial instrument for the implementation of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, a statement by the European Commission (EC) Delegation in Jordan said Saturday.

The statement said the MEDA Programme, established in 1996 following the launching of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in Barcelona conference of November 1995, aims at encourag-

ing and supporting the reform of economic and social structures of Europe's Mediterranean partners in preparation for the creation of the world's largest free zone area by the year 2010.

In 1996 and 1997, high priority was accorded to supporting — under the MEDA Programme — Jordan's economic reform process and private sector, according to the statement.

It added that a total of 100 million ECUs (European Currency Units), or about \$110 million, was provided for structural adjustment support, seven million ECUs (about \$7.7 million) for the establishment of a

Business Service Centre and 10 million ECUs (about \$11 million) for the establishment of risk capital in support of small- and medium-size enterprises from the European Investment Bank (EIB).

A programme for financial and technical cooperation covering the 1997-1999 period is currently being worked out by the EC and Jordan, the statement said.

The framework convention will be signed by Planning Minister Rima Khalaf and Deputy Director General of the EC's External Relations Directorate Santiago Gomez-Reino.

## THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

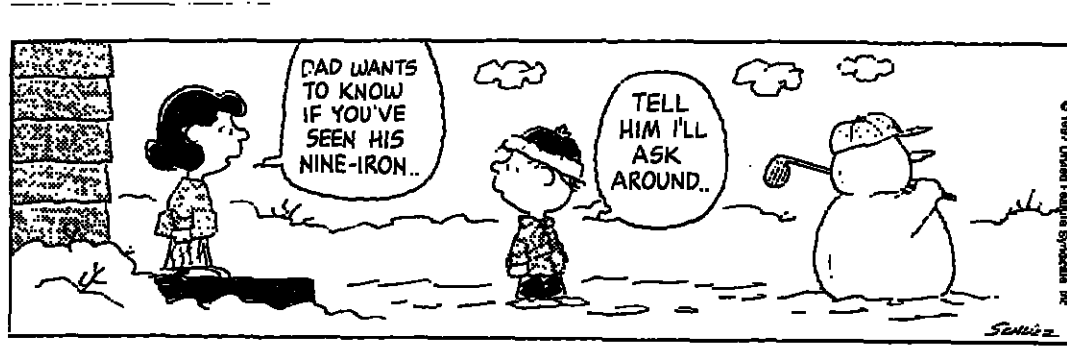
ACROSS

- 1 Scottish valley
- 5 Islamic text
- 10 Beatty and Forem
- 14 Greek peak
- 15 Actress Massey
- 16 Ambler or Idle
- 17 Cat in boots
- 18 Gam and Moreno
- 19 Remove knots
- 20 Un'cut
- 21 superior to all?
- 23 Secret agent
- 25 Nights before
- 26 Stands up
- 27 Israeli seaport
- 29 Room in jail
- 31 Church projection
- 32 Zimbabwe's capital
- 35 Orisel
- 38 Un'cut discount goods?
- 41 Trains on
- 42 Lungs and livers
- 43 AM-PM connection
- 44 Queen of Carthage
- 45 Barber's partner
- 46 Plots of land
- 47 Floats up and down
- 52 Jellied delicacy
- 53 Un'cut be cut?
- 57 Rhythmic cadence
- 58 Gold measure
- 59 Retirement
- 62 Region
- 63 All thumbs
- 64 Leafy abode
- 65 Coin flip
- 66 Singer Gorme
- 67 06/06/44

DOWN

- 1 Republicans
- 2 Fighting Tigers of the NCAA
- 3 Topical writers
- 4 Shuttle grp.
- 5 Imperial Russian Ballet, today
- 6 Martini garnish
- 7 Surf sounds
- 8 Med. sch. subj.
- 9 "Bed Riddance" author
- 10 Of the nerves
- 11 Sea eagles
- 12 Quaker verb
- 13 Highlanders
- 21 Actress Arthur
- 22 Berlin or
- 23 Portion
- 24 Of the Vatican
- 25 Cost to play
- 29 "High Hopes" lyricist
- 30 Memorable times
- 32 Cattle collection
- 33 Jason's ship
- 34 Broncobusters' grp.
- 35 Trailblazed
- 36 Unanimously
- 37 Of punishment
- 39 Damp
- 40 Genetic letters
- 44 River ends
- 45 Pres. before DOE
- 46 G-sharp
- 47 Egypt's capital
- 48 Stir up
- 49 Exposed
- 50 Giffie's lun
- 51 Singer Milder
- 54 Dust Bowl migrant
- 55 Numerous
- 56 Posterior
- 60 Botanist Gray
- 61 Pligpen

## Peanuts



## Andy Capp



## Mutt'n'Jeff



## HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

**ARIES:** (March 21 to April 19) You'll perform brilliantly this morning, especially if you've got an audience. You can be a real showoff, but nobody minds since you put on such a good performance. Avoid a romantic difficulty this evening, by doing as you're told. That'll keep things nice.

**TAURUS:** (April 20 to May 20) Somebody's leaning on you to do something you're not interested on. You're good with words right now, but that doesn't mean you want to confront this particular issue. Formulate a plan before you meet the others for dinner. That's where the flare-up is most likely to occur.

**GEMINI:** (May 21 to June 21) If there's a sport you enjoy, get out early and make a day of it. You'll have a marvellous time. There's one potential fly in the ointment. Your sweetheart would rather do something practical. Convince this person he or she would do a better job of it alone. Then you can go play with your mate's blessing.

**CANCER:** (June 22 to July 21) Today could be just miserable if you let it. You tend to put up with a lot. That's why it's always fun to get yourself a special treat for having been so good. If you have enough money, it's highly recommended that you do. If you don't have that much, sell something.

**LEO:** (July 22 to August 21) You manage to stay calm through the work week, but you like to kick up your heels over the weekend. The problem is that your sweetheart wants to talk, and you've had about all the talking you can stand. You've just got to get out and play. Go for it.

**VIRGO:** (August 22 to September 22) This is a good day to shop for household items. Get what you need, even if it costs more than you had budgeted. You're getting attention from a co-worker. One of your hidden talents has come out, and now other people want you to do more of that. Accept a nudge in the right direction.

**LIBRA:** (September 23 to October 22) This would be a good day to get married. You're always attracted to the intellectual type, but the romantic connection you make today will be more than that. If you and your sweetheart are building something together, you'll fall in love on a whole new level.

**SCORPIO:** (October 23 to November 21) There are tonnes of things to fix, rearrange, toss, sort and otherwise deal with. If you were your usual complacent self you'd never get it all done. You're also probably feeling like buying some new tools. That's not a bad idea. Give everything you can to make this job go more easily. Try not to snap any heads off in the process.

**SAGITTARIUS:** (November 22 to December 21) Unseen forces are pushing you towards your destiny. It might be fun if you weren't fighting it tooth and nail. The thing you're going to be best at is the very thing you want to do the least. Well, grit your teeth and do what you have to do. It'll be good for you, if it hurts you at all.

**CAPRICORN:** (December 22 to January 20) Around the middle of the day, your expertise will come in handy. You could prevent an accident. It looks as if you're preparing to travel later. Are you patching up an old boat? That's not a bad idea. If you're not involved in a project like that, here's your excuse. Get busy.

**AQUARIUS:** (January 21 to February 19) You love studying, today even more so than usual. Well, why not study ways to make money? Conditions are perfect for that right now. Focus your laser beam mentality on ways of fattening your nest egg. This might seem like it's out of your area of expertise, but you'll pick it up as you go along.

**PISCES:** (February 20 to March 20) This is a good day to ask an older person for money. You may have to pass some test, however. Don't go into battle unprepared. If you're asking for a loan, figure out what you need to spend it on, and how you're going to pay it back. If you offer a return for the investment, your chances are very good indeed.

Birthstone of February: Amethyst — Onyx

## THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



## JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

UTOOD  
IDEPT  
REHTE  
GLUEED

Answer here: HE \_\_\_\_\_ THE \_\_\_\_\_

Yesterday's Jumble: SOOTY APART ABRUPT HICUP  
Answer: What the groomer ended up with in the movie — A "BIT" PART



## Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

### Income and wealth distribution retreated over past few decades — study

**\*\* DESPITE THE** relative high growth in average per capita income over the past few decades, the income and wealth distribution clearly retreated, a study about human development in the kingdom shows. "The retreat heightened the deprivation of the wide segments of the population and boosted the incomes and wealth of a limited and already rich group at the expense of the majority of the people, the study indicated.

According to the study, prepared by Taher Jaradat who works at the Directorate of Human Development at the Ministry of Planning, the economic adjustment programme that Jordan implemented since the late 80s until now has negatively affected the "wide base of the limited and low-income people." Such a programme, the study said, has put an added burden on the most of the people.

But the study points out that the negative effects from the economic adjustment programme will be lessened as a result of government measures, started in early 90s, to implement plans and schemes directed basically to improve living conditions to underprivileged groups in the Jordanian society.

Mr. Jaradat monitored Jordan's ranking in terms of human development and detected obvious fluctuations between 1990 and 1997. He noted that Jordan ranked (73) among world countries in human development in 1990. In 1991, the Kingdom went down to rank 83rd and further down to 86, 99 and 98 in the following three years. The country's rating improved in 1996 to reach the 70 level but then fell back to 84 in 1997.

The study explains that the lower ranking for a country does not necessarily mean that the human development in that country has retreated. It could well be that other countries have secured higher degrees of development and such an advancement has caused the rating of the country, such as Jordan, to fall back.

The study highlighted a number of challenges facing the human development in Jordan. Among the challenges are narrowing the gaps and differences between men and women and between rural and urban areas. Other issues mentioned were the need to move towards decentralisation in governing and management, consolidating public participation and working to achieve sustainable economic growth as well as consolidating the capabilities and talents necessary to activate human development (AI Dustour).

### Workshop in Bologna ends, gives Jordanians chance to export to Italy

By Mahmoud Masharqa  
Special to the Jordan Times

**Bologna (Italy)** — A Jordanian-Italian joint workshop held at the Italian city of Bologna last month culminated in concluding several contracts for exporting Jordanian products to Italian markets.

The contracts also covered exchanging various goods related to food industries, agriculture, marble stone and ceramics.

The four-day workshop, organised by the Italian trade mission in Amman, had discussed trade prospects and ways to give impetus to Jordanian-Italian economic cooperation.

On the sidelines of the workshop, Jordanian and Italian businessmen held series of meetings and discussed joint projects or trade exchanges mainly concerning packaging and packing processes, food processing, irrigation

equipment, wood-work machines, ceramic slabs and other items.

According to Giorgio Siera, head of the chamber of trade in the state of Emilia, the workshop will further promote Jordanian-Italian economic and trade links. He noted that the geographic location of both Jordan and Italy is bound to help them promote their trade, especially now that Jordan has signed an association agreement with the European Union.

The head of the Italian trade mission in Jordan, Ferdinando Fiore, announced that two Italian trade missions will visit Amman towards the end of February to hold talks with Jordanian business people.

The talks will cover export exchanges of industrial equipment, leather, ceramics, restaurant and hotel equipment and various other industrial products.

### IIF: Asia's private capital inflows fall sharply in 1997

**DAVOS,** Switzerland (AFP) — Net private capital flows to key emerging market economies shrank to an estimated \$200 billion in 1997 from a peak of \$297 billion in 1996, the Institute of International Finance (IIF) said Friday.

Most of the drop was accounted for by Thailand, Indonesia, South Korea, Malaysia and the Philippines, the Asian countries that have suffered the worst currency and stock market crashes in the last eight months.

These five economies attracted just \$12 billion in 1997 compared to \$93 billion in 1996, an IIF report on capital flows said.

Commercial banks were key to the contraction as they declined to roll over maturing short term debt towards the end of 1997, particularly for Indonesia and South Korea.

Capital flows to emerging economies not directly affected by Asia's mayhem modestly increased to \$212 billion in 1997 from \$202 billion in 1996.

The Washington-based institute estimated that net private flows would total \$171.5 billion in 1998, "assuming the situation in Asia stabilises," William Rhodes, vice chairman of Citicorp, told a press briefing at the World Economic Forum in Davos.

Equity flows to the region should dominate at around \$130 billion with foreign direct investment (FDI) of roughly \$107 billion, the IIF forecasts.

"We do see direct investment in China dipping, but it is still expected to be the largest recipient of FDI, exceeding \$30 billion this year," said Charles Dallara, IIF managing director.

Kenneth Courtis, chief economist of Deutsche Bank Group Asia Pacific, forecast a sharp drop of investment in China this year, saying the sources who provided 75 per cent of its inward flows — overseas Chinese, Japan and South Korea — would pump the cash into their own economies this year instead.

Mr. Courtis estimated that 25 per cent of all Chinese loans were non-performing.

Mr. Dallara appeared more convinced of China's commitment to start dealing with its troubled banking sector.

"There is a recognition (by China) of the need to restructure its banking system and state-owned enterprises," he said.

Foreign investment in South America rose to \$50 billion last year from \$35 billion in 1996.

"We do not see any immediate vulnerabilities there," said Mr. Rhodes.

"Financial systems in Latin America are stronger than historically and this will act as a buffer against Asian contagion."

He admitted that South American economies could suffer from the sharper trade competitiveness of Asian countries whose products have become vastly cheaper on world markets due to deep depreciation of their currencies.

But he said that Brazil, for example, had taken some strong measures — fiscal adjustment there has been "quite impressive and they are also willing to follow tight monetary policy."

Official flows to the five crisis-hit Asian countries rose to \$27 billion in 1997 from virtually zero in 1996.

Such flows are seen reaching \$31 billion this year, including \$5 billion of bilateral assistance disbursed as part of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) rescue package for South Korea and further IMF payouts of \$11 billion for Thailand, Indonesia and South Korea.

With strong current account adjustments likely in these countries and assuming the refinancing of most maturing debt, "it should not be necessary for all the \$100 billion notionally available under official support packages to be disbursed," the IIF said.

### Britain's two top drug companies discuss merger

**LONDON (R)** — Britain's two leading drug companies have announced plans for a 100 billion pound (\$163.1 billion) merger to create the world's largest pharmaceutical company.

Smithkline Beecham PLC and Glaxo Wellcome PLC waited until after the closure of the New York Stock Market on Friday night before making the announcement.

The surprise move came after Smithkline Beecham abandoned initial merger talks with American home products Corp. a leading U.S. drug and consumer products company, after just 10 days.

If the merger between the two drug giants goes ahead, the world's largest pharmaceutical company would have combined annual revenues of \$26.6 billion.

In a press statement, the two said they were considering a deal in which Glaxo Wellcome shareholders would own 59.5 per cent of the equity of the combined company and Smithkline shareholders would take the remaining 40.5 per cent.

The executive chairman would be Sir Richard Sykes, currently chairman of Glaxo. The chief executive and chairman of the executive management committee would be Jan Leschly, now chief executive of Smithkline Beecham.

Analysts forecast that a merger on such a giant scale could spark a wave of consolidations in the industry.

"The combined company would be totally untouchable," said Hemant Shah, a securities analyst with HKS Co.

The new company would take almost 10 per cent of the international prescription medicine market. This would be twice the amount of its nearest rivals, Merck of the United States and Switzerland's Novartis.

The two companies employ about 110,000 people worldwide and the announcement inevitably sparked fears among staff of

job losses.

The joint statement said: "The proposed merger would create the world's largest pharmaceutical group, based in the U.K., and represents a compelling strategic opportunity for both companies to enhance their industry position and to realise a meaningful increase in shareholder value."

"A major and significant benefit of the proposed merger would be the formation of the largest research and development organisation in the global healthcare industry."

Spokesmen for both companies declined to make any further comment and the statement concluded: "A further announcement will be made as soon as practicable."

Jami Rubin, a Wall Street analyst with Schroder Co. said there was little product overlap between the two companies with the exception of an antiviral drug. "It looks like this could be a very powerful company with significant room for cost savings. The combined company can eliminate 25 per cent of duplicated cost," he said.

The Financial Times, commenting on the proposed merger, said: "At first glance, the division of spoils looks fair ... this really is a merger of the strong with the strong. Both companies are growing at an underlying rate of 14.5 per cent a year."

Smithkline Beecham was formed from the merger of the United Kingdom's Beecham and the United States' Smithkline Beckman in 1989.

Its best known products include the ulcer treatment tagamet, the smoking inhibitor nicotine gum, the cold and flu medicine contact, the antacid tums and aquafresh toothpaste.

Glaxo is a leader in antiviral medicines, including the leading AIDS treatment zovirax, for treating genital herpes and cold sores.

## REUTERS REUTERS

### The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar		1.8316	0.6130	1.4780	127.10	1.4519	1866.35	2.0642	6.1340
DE Mark	0.5480		0.3344	0.8069	69.39	0.7923	986.00	1.1270	3.3487
GB Sterling	1.6313	2.9305		2.4142	207.45	2.3678	2945.70	3.3673	10.0064
CH Franc	0.6775	124.04	0.4149		66.09	0.9831	1223.40	139.54	4.1544
JP Yen	0.0079	1.4404	0.4818	1.1608		1.1418	14.21	162.34	4.8242
CA Dollar	0.6889	1.2216	0.4171	0.9979	1.14		1216.22	1.3877	4.1254
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0137	0.3391	0.8817	1423.08	0.9034		11.43	3.3952
NL Guilder	0.4844	88.71	0.2967	71.49	81.63	0.7030	874.87		2.9709
FR Franc	0.1630	0.2885	0.0999	24.0587	20.70	0.2386	33.65	33.6500	

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBR	EGP
US Dollar		0.7090	3.7504	0.3770	3.5410	0.3053	3.6727	1627.00	3.4100
Jordan Dinar	1.4104		5.2897	0.5317	6.1354	0.4306	6.1801	2163.74	4.5096
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.1890		0.1006	0.97	0.0814	0.98	407.16	0.9092
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8507	9.9485		8.66	0.8089	9.74	4050.81	0.4048
Qatar Dinar	0.2746	0.1947	1.0300	1.0300		0.0839	1.01	419.39	0.9366
Kuwait Dinar	3.2765	2.3223	12.2843	1.2348	11.83		12.03	5001.64	0.9366
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1930	1.0212	1.0206	0.9914	0.0831		415.77	0.9285
Lebanese/1000	0.65	0.4643	2.4561	0.2469	2.3944	0.1989	2.4052		2.2331
Egyptian	0.2933	0.2079	1.0998	0.1106	1.0677	0.0895	1.0770	447.80	

Energy			Mid-East Currencies					
Oils	Last	Previous	Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
Brent	16.72	16.43	SA Riyal	0.2666	0.4985	0.16346	0.39363	33.9029
WTI	17.18	17.30	AE Dirham	0.2723	0.49893	0.16891	0.40203	34.82
Bonny	16.72	16.43	KW Dinar	3.2765	6.0024	2.00803	4.83559	416.493
Dubai	14.28	13.93	BH Dinar	0.3770	4.85909	1.62802	3.91696	337.268
UL Gas	161.00	160.00	CY Pound	1.8589	3.4046	1.1388	2.7437	236.266

Metal Prices			Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)						
Metal	Bid	Offer	Period	-1-	-3-	-6-	-9-	Year	
Gold (oz's)	302.2	302.7	C'mny	Month	Months	Months	Months	Year	
Silver (oz's)	6.22	6.24	USD	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.57	
Platinum (oz's)	388	390	GBP	7.48	7.40	7.40	7.26	7.19	
AL (3 Months)	1531	1534	JPY	0.45	0.41	0.45	0.54	0.47	
CU (3 Months)	1758	1763	DEM	3.40	3.48	3.59	3.60	3.71	
Zinc (3 Months)	1128	1132	FRF	3.44	3.55	3.64	3.76	3.83	
Lead (3 Months)	626	630	CHF	0.98	1.12	1.27	1.18	1.25	
Ni (3 Months)	5420	5450	ITL	6.75	6.06	5.73	5.39	5.14	

Main Equity Indices									
Source	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low	Pr Cls		
New York	DOW JONES	7898.5	-66.62	-0.83	7985.97	7893.05	7973.02		
New York	S&P 500	980.28	-5.21	-0.53	987.41	979.63	985.49		
London	FT-SE 100	5458.5	36.1	0.67	5468.6	5388.5	5422.4		
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	16628.47	-386.12	-2.27	17011.1	16627.8	17014.6		
Paris	CAC 40	3172.14	38.32	1.22	3173.98	3123.13	3133.82		
Frankfurt	DAX	4440.38	21	0.48	4450.12	4422.43	4419.38		

Energy			JOD Cross Rates		
Commodity	Last	Delivery	Currency	Buy	Sell
Coffee (c/lbs)	181.42	Spot	US Dollar	0.708	0.710
Cocoa (\$/ton)	1694	Spot	GB Sterling	1.1761	1.181
Sugar (\$/ton)	287	Spot	DE Mark	0.3961	0.3981
Wheat (\$/ton)	0	Spot	CH Franc	0.4884	0.4908
Soya (c/lbs)	25.04	Spot	FR Franc	0.1183	0.1189
Tea (stg/lbs)	225	Spot	JP Yen	0.5627	0.5655
Barley (\$/stg)	0	Spot	NL Guilder	0.3516	0.3533
Rice (\$/ton)	400	Spot	IT Lira	0.4015	0.4035

\* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

## JORDAN MARKETPLACE \*\*\* JORDAN MARKETPLACE \*\*\* JORDAN MARKETPLACE

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# Hingis the great wins Australian Open

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Martina Hingis beat Conchita Martinez in straight sets in the Australian Open women's final Saturday to become the youngest player to successfully defend a Grand Slam title.

The 17-year-old World No. 1 from Switzerland beat the 11th ranked Spaniard 6-3, 6-3 in 86 minutes to capture the fourth major of her short but spectacular career.

But in the men's doubles final, top seeds Mark Woodforde and Todd Woodbridge of Australia were beaten in a five set battle by Jonas Bjorkman of Sweden and Dutchman Jacco Eltingh, playing in their first tournament together.

Hingis dominated Martinez from the first game, when she broke the 25-year-old Spaniard's service, to the last when Martinez put a backhand shot wide to again lose her serve.

Hingis insisted, though, this was the most difficult and most satisfying of her four majors.

"It was very different. A lot harder than last year because there were so many different expectations of me and pressure, especially from myself because I really wanted to defend the title," she said.

"The draw was a lot harder and it was not very easy for me to get through," added the champion, who still only dropped two sets in seven matches.

Hingis picked up the \$385,000 winner's cheque at the age of 17 years four months and one day, 65 days younger than when American Monica Seles retained her French Open title in 1991.

She was already the youngest winner of

Wimbledon last year and legendary status beckons if she can win all four titles this year.

"I have the first one," Hingis told a press conference. "It would be great if I could do it." Only Steffi Graf (1988), Margaret Court (1970) and Maureen Connolly (1953) have achieved the four title sweep.

Last year she won the Australian Open, Wimbledon and U.S. Open and was a beaten finalist at the French Open.

Martinez, the 1994 Wimbledon champion who had a bad 1997 without a title for the first time in a decade, broke back straight away and then tried to slow down the pace to counter Hingis's deadly accuracy.

"She would just keep the ball very low from the backhand, just slicing it back all the time, and she just had so much spin on every ball that I had to do all the work myself."

"What I had to do today was be patient, wait for everything," said Hingis.

Martinez risked everything on heavy spin, hoping to tempt Hingis into a mistake that she could punish with a backup blast from the baseline.

But the Spaniard made more errors which were seized upon by Hingis, who broke five Martinez service games while keeping up a brilliant 75 per cent success rate with her own serve.

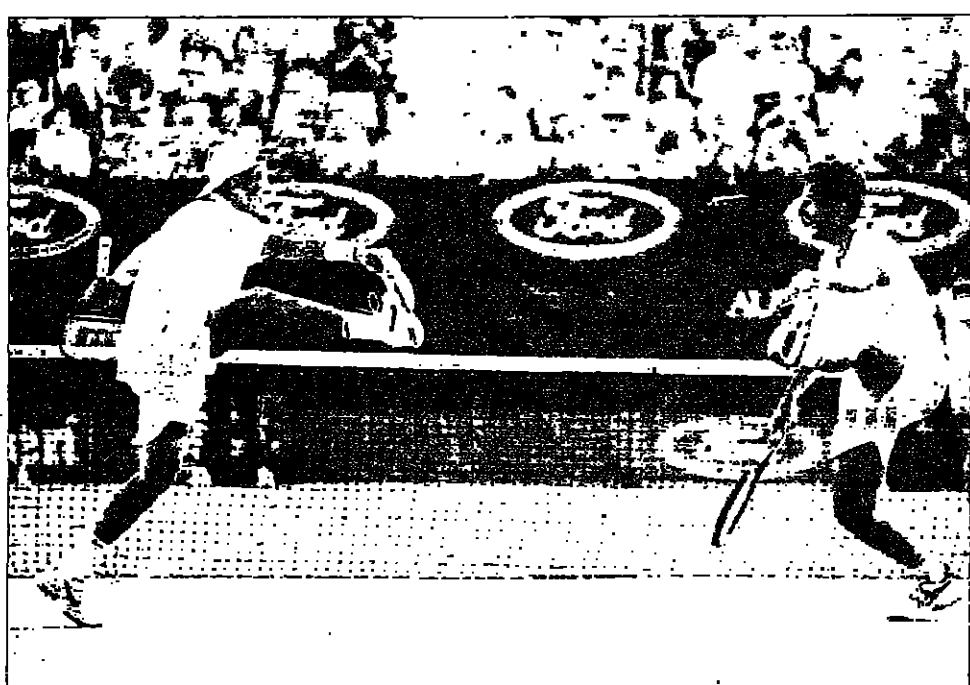
Hingis had two set points in the eighth game but Martinez held after four deuces, leaving the Swiss teenager to serve out to go one-up.

Hingis broke the Martinez serve for a third time in the opening game of the second set but again lost her own in the second.

The Spaniard applied her most intense pressure in the



Switzerland's Martina Hingis hugs her trophy and a kangaroo soft toy after her win in the final of the Australian Open against Spain's Conchita Martinez in Melbourne January 31. Hingis the defending champion won in straight sets 6-3, 6-3 (Reuters photo)



Sweden's Jonas Bjorkman (L) and doubles teammate Jacco Eltingh of the Netherlands express their delight after winning the Australian Open Doubles final against Mark Woodforde and Todd Woodbridge of Australia in Melbourne January 31. Bjorkman and Eltingh won in five sets 6-2 5-7 2-6 6-4 6-3 (Reuters photo)

fourth game with Hingis serving. The longest rally of the match, when both had to race from one side of the court to the other, ended with Hingis leaning on her racket to rest and Martinez calling for a towel.

Martinez did not recover. She clawed back one match point before going down, again on her own serve.

Martinez is another who believes Hingis is on course to become one of the game's big names.

"I think she is a great

player and if she keeps going on winning like this, why not?"

Hingis, who also won the women's doubles title on Friday, will play in the Tokyo tournament next week — when Graf will again be absent. But Hingis said she will take more time off in between tournaments as she attempts to become the youngest Grand Slam winner.

"I definitely played too much last year at the end of the year," she said.

In the men's doubles, Bjorkman and Eltingh stopped Woodforde and Woodbridge getting their 10th Grand Slam doubles title with a 6-2, 5-7, 2-6, 6-4, 6-3 victory. Bjorkman and Eltingh only came together as a doubles team for this tournament and Eltingh may retire at the end of the year because of increasing knee problems.

Petr Korda, the Czech sixth seed, plays Chilean ninth seed Marcelo Rios in the men's final on Sunday.

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Petr Korda is so thin he dare not do weight training. Marcelo Rios was not so long ago too "lazy" to win. One of them will be Australian Open men's champion on Sunday.

Neither has won a Grand Slam title. Both are left-handers and both have upset seeding committees and the bookies by getting this far.

Their similarities end there. And that is what is going to make this final one of those events that is guaranteed to go down in sporting history.

If Korda of the Czech Republic were to win it would be a personal triumph over adversity. Victory for Chile's Rios would prove it is possible to get out of a rut, though the rich kid admits the \$420,000 winner's cheque probably will not cover his Melbourne casino gambling debts.

The collective failure of the world's top five players — Pete Sampras, Pat Rafter, Michael Chang, Jonas Bjorkman and Greg Rusedski — opened up the path to Melbourne Park centre court for Korda and Rios.

Korda, the World No. 7, turned 30 halfway through the Australian Open. He says it feels like "five minutes to 12" in his career and he has been playing every match as though it were his last.

Korda, 1.90 metres tall, and sometimes described as the "human toothbrush" because of his spiky hair, is an eccentric and emotional character.

He has done scissor kicks and cartwheels for the crowds after winning and sometimes fought back tears as he has told press conferences how happy he is to be back at the top.

Korda was last in a Grand Slam final when he went down in straight sets to Jim Courier at the French Open in 1992.

After that, his fear of surgery made him keep putting off treatment to acute groin and hernia problems. He almost gave up tennis in 1995 but was persuaded to keep going by his wife, Regina Rajchrtova, a former player.

Within 48 hours of Englishman Tony Pickard becoming his coach, Korda was packed off for surgery.

## Australian Open: Korda and Rios profiles

### • Petr Korda — Czech Republic

World ranking: Seven  
Seeding: Six  
Birthdate: January 23, 1968  
Birthplace: Prague  
Height: 6ft 3in (1.90m)  
Weight: 160 pounds (72kg)  
Turned professional: 1987  
Plays: Left-handed  
Career prize money (to end of 1997): \$9,039,709  
Grand Slam record: Losing finalist at 1992 French Open, ATP titles: 8 — The oldest Grand Slam finalist since Ecuadorian Andres Gomez at the French Open in 1990. Reached a career high world ranking of No. 5 in July 1992

### • Marcelo Rios — Chile

World ranking: Eight  
Seeding: Nine  
Birthdate: December 26, 1975  
Birthplace: Santiago  
Height: 5ft 9in (1.75m)  
Weight: 140 pounds (63kg)  
Turned professional: 1994  
Plays: Left-handed  
Career prize money (to end of 1997): \$2,715,549  
Grand Slam record: Quarter-finalist at Australian Open and U.S. Open in 1997  
ATP titles: 5 — In 1997, was the first South American to finish the year in top 10 of ATP rankings since Ecuadorian Andres Gomez in 1990. — The first Chilean in a Grand Slam final.

"Now when I think of all the tennis I missed I wish I had done it years earlier," he said.

He still has various ailments though and says he deliberately avoids weight training rooms for fear of damaging the thin muscles on his wiry frame.

But Korda is back, in stunning form and the favourite to win his first title at the end of a career which has promised so much.

If he wins Korda will be the oldest player to win a Grand Slam since Andres Gomez of Ecuador won the French Open in 1990. If 22-year-old Rios takes the title he will be hailed as one of Latin America's biggest tennis heroes since then.

When the Czech was ailing physically, his Chilean opponent was suffering mental torment. The son of a Santiago tycoon had everything going for him but got a reputation on the men's circuit as a quitter.

He is still a prickly character but has started to acknowledge his difficulties. Rios said he only changed his attitude after other players started asking why he was "raking," or giving up.

"It was like I was too lazy to try to fight or I didn't care about it."

The Chilean with the playboy looks decided then he wanted to be a winner and highlighted his new fighting spirit at last year's French Open when he twice came back from two sets down to win matches.

"If you want to, you realise you can win matches even if you are losing."

Rios will need all of this new steel to beat Korda, who is fancied even though his No. 7 world ranking is just one ahead of the Chilean.

Neither has a big serve but Korda is faster and 15 centimetres taller than Rios. His confidence is also sky high after stunning wins against the likes of fourth seed Jonas Bjorkman of Sweden.

But the two have played six times and won three each. Rios won in straight sets in the first round of the Australian Open last year.

"But it's totally different to play a final," said Rios, who already feels he has proven his worth in the top 10.

"There are a lot of players around, who even if they have not won a Grand Slam, are still great players," he said.

## Calgary bids to host 2010 Winter Olympics

CALGARY (AFP) — Calgary officially launched Friday its campaign to be the host venue for the 2010 Winter Olympics.

Patricia Trotter, chair of Calgary's bid committee, said much of the campaign will be based on existing international-class facilities in and around the city.

Calgary, located about 90 minutes by car from the Rocky Mountains, hosted the 1988 Winter Olympics.

Trotter pointed out that over the past 10 years, 41 national and 21 international sports events had been held at Calgary's proposed Olympic sites.

"Just imagine," she said, "the legacy that could be dedicated to summer and winter sports, both nationally and internationally, by re-using these existing facilities in 2010 instead of replicating them (elsewhere)."

## New Graf delay shocks Australian Open

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Martina Hingis said Saturday she did not care when Steffi Graf makes a comeback, but the German's latest tournament cancellation has increased pessimism over her return.

News of Graf's withdrawal from the WTA event in Tokyo because of new knee trouble spread around the Australian Open as new World No. 1 Hingis was winning her fourth major title.

Hingis said that even if the 28-year-old Graf did appear again on the women's tour "it will not be the same."

The Swiss star is sensitive about pitting her

record against Graf or another former World No. 1 Monica Seles. Graf and Seles were absent in Melbourne.

When asked if she was disappointed about Graf not being in Tokyo, Hingis said: "I'm going to be there and I will try to win again. For me, I don't care who is on the other side."

"I doesn't really matter to me and it's probably more disappointing for her than me."

"I know how hard it is to come back. She has been away out of tennis for so long, so it's more disappointing for her that she can't play."

Hingis added: "I would love to play her

again. When she comes back it is probably not going to be the same any more as she was on a high. But it is definitely going to be interesting for me to see her on the other side."

Graf, winner of 21 Grand Slam titles, withdrew from the Australian Open last month and pulled out of the Tokyo tournament on Friday with a recurrence of knee trouble that has sidelined her since the French Open last May.

But Graf, now ranked 30 in the world, delayed her return again after her troublesome left knee, which was operated on last

June, flared up again. "Up until two days ago my preparations were going fine — for a month now I've made good progress physically," Graf said in Germany.

"But unfortunately on Wednesday, the night before I was due to fly out, I felt pain in my left knee again."

The German's injury problems started in Tokyo in January last year when she aggravated a knee tendon, which forced her to pull out of a long-awaited final against Hingis.

The seven-time Wimbledon champion missed the following three months, surren-

dering her No. 1 ranking to Hingis.

She returned to reach the French Open quarter-finals before undergoing a knee operation. She now faces a race against time to be fit for a WTA tournament in Hannover starting February 16.

International Tennis Federation president Brian Tobin said: "I am not totally surprised, but she is going to have to do something soon."

"I hope that she is going to come back but I am worried. The longer she leaves it the more difficult it will be."

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# U.N. panel looks at ways to speed supplies to Iraq

NEW YORK (R) — The United Nations Sanctions Committee on Iraq, in a report to the U.N. secretary on Friday, agreed to look at ways to speed supplies to Iraq under the so-called "oil-for-food" deal, though members failed to agree on some key issues.

Friday's report comes in the wake of repeated complaints by Iraq that the panel was holding up approval of supplies under the programme, which allows Baghdad to sell \$2 billion of oil over 180 days to pay for food, medicine and other humanitarian goods for ordinary Iraqis suffering since

1990 under the Gulf war sanctions regime.

Within the committee, which is made up of the 15 Security Council members, the U.S. has been the country mainly behind blocks or delays to Iraqi requests, contending that Baghdad is trying to slip through items with a potential military use or which are not priority "humanitarian" goods.

France and Russia, which have been generally supportive of a less stringent approach, had wanted to delegate responsibility for approving at least some of Iraq's requests to the U.N. secretariat — for items

like food and some medical items — but the U.S. blocked this request, according to panel members.

However, Friday's report said the committee "agreed to look at the criteria for delegating the approval of some items to the secretariat in the future," said a Western diplomat on the panel. "The U.S. had been steadfast against that so there is some progress," he said.

The committee also asked the U.N. to examine whether Banque Nationale de Paris (BNP) New York branch, which manages the oil programme's escrow account, can

allow Iraq to buy goods on the basis of oil contract "letters of credit" before the actual cash is deposited. This has proved one of the main "bottlenecks" in the approval process.

Some committee members had argued that BNP is following sound banking practice in waiting for the cash and would require a guarantee. The U.N. is not allowed to provide such a guarantee so if BNP requires one then France, which proposed the idea of speeding the banking process, might be asked to consider guaranteeing the letters of credit, a committee member said.

## Diplomats visit palace in Iraqi president's hometown

BAGHDAD (R) — Diplomats in Iraq enjoyed a second day of lavish hospitality on Friday as Iraqi officials, trying to show their "presidential sites" held no deadly secrets, hosted them at a palace in President Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Saeed Al Safar and Oil Minister Amir Mohammad Rasheed hosted the reception, the second of three parties for diplomats over the Muslim holiday of Eid Al Fitr.

"It was very elegant, nothing garish," said one diplomat of the site, which he said looked like it had been built in the last two years, despite stringent trade sanctions on Iraq since

1990. "Several small villas and one small palace, like any other in the Arab World — marble and chandeliers," he said.

Iraq launched its lunch offensive in an effort to show that presidential sites, from which it has barred United Nations arms inspectors, are not being used to conceal material related to weapons of mass destruction.

The inspectors, charged with dismantling those weapons, want unrestricted access throughout Iraq. They say material or documents related to the arms programmes may be hidden in sites around the country.

Iraq has scoffed at the idea that volatile chemical or bio-

logical agents may be stored in sites where President Saddam Hussein sleeps. But it insists eight presidential sites remain off-limits to inspectors, to protect national security.

The United States has declared that it may resort to military force to make Iraq comply with U.N. resolutions.

The diplomat said he saw "nothing remotely connected" with weapons production at the palace, but added that the outing had proved little.

"The only thing one could claim to learn from a thing like this is that the Iraqis are still able to build a very elegant palace despite a lack of resources," he said.

## SPLA claims seizing third largest town in southern Sudan

CAIRO (AFP) — Southern rebels say they have captured the town of Aweil, the third largest in southern Sudan, for the first time in their fifteen-year rebellion against Khartoum.

A statement received here said the town's capture followed the return to rebel ranks of Kerbino Kuanyen, a key commander who defected to the government last April.

It said fighting was still continuing around the government garrison which was encircled by forces of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA).

The SPLA statement denied government claims that it had retaken the second town of Wau but admitted that government troops had recaptured the airport and that heavy fighting was going on.

The SPLA said its forces were preventing any flights into Wau and also "now controlled the railway between Aweil and Wau, the only land access to Wau for government troops."

The fighting at Wau had inflicted "a large number of dead and wounded in government ranks," said the statement from the Eritrean capital Asmara.

The SPLA announced it had captured six strategic points in Wau including the airport and railway headquarters in a communiqué Thursday.

The Sudanese army admitted on Friday that it had lost 23 men in the fighting, including four officers, but maintained it still controlled the town.

About 500 SPLA troops attacked Wau at midnight on Wednesday in an assault which coincided with other attacks in the same state against Gogrial and Aweil, the deputy chief of staff, General Abdul-Rahman Siral-Khatim, told the SUNA news agency.

"It is the first time that our forces have taken Aweil," the SPLA's Cairo representative Daniel Kody said.

The SPLA had also captured 108 government troops at Wau, he said.

He said that the return to rebel ranks of Kerbino Kuanyen was part of a carefully orchestrated plan by the SPLA.

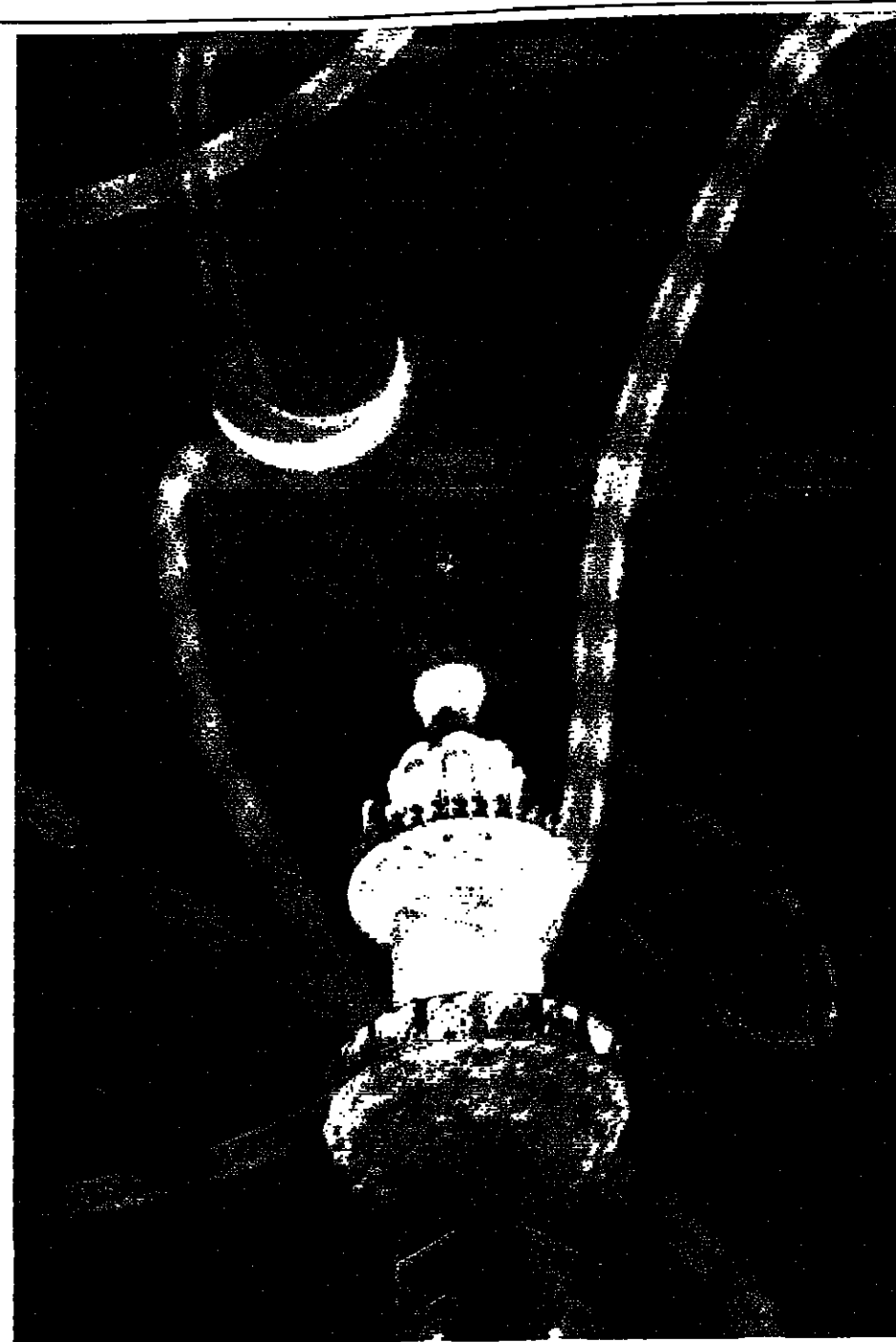
"It was a trap," Mr. Kody said of Mr. Kuanyen's defection to the government last April.

"Everything that is happening is part of a plan which we have been working on since Kuanyen left Khartoum to set up near Wau four months ago," he said.

"The government sent tanks, uniforms, and munitions which we have used to attack Wau."

Mr. Kuanyen founded the SPLA in 1983, but in the same year he was removed from its leadership by Colonel John Garang, a fellow Dinka, who has since headed the rebel movement in the south.

Sudanese President Omar Bashir appointed Mr. Kuanyen as deputy chairman of the South Sudan Coordination Council on Jan. 15.



THE CRESCENT OF 'EID: Lights glow from the minaret of Al Fayha Mosque in Shmeisani Friday, as part of celebrations to mark the 'Eid Al Fitr holiday which ends the fasting month of Ramadan. The sighting of the crescent moon marks the end of Ramadan and start of 'Eid (Reuters photo)

## New cloud hangs over Iran-EU relations after court condemns German to death for sex

TEHRAN (AFP) — A new cloud is hanging over Iran's ties with the European Union (EU) just as the new government of moderate cleric Mohammad Khatami was trying to put their relations on a new footing by rejecting calls for the resumption of their "critical dialogue".

Bonn revealed Friday that a Tehran court had condemned a German national to death for having sexual relations with a Muslim woman.

Helmut H., 56, was convicted of "a forbidden relationship between a non-Muslim and a Muslim," the German foreign ministry said, adding that the court's decision could "have a most serious adverse effect on ties between Germany and Iran."

The German government said it was "shocked" by the decision which flew "in the face of all the principles of justice and humanity," and protested to both the Iranian charge d'affaires in Bonn and the foreign ministry in Tehran.

Fresh tension between Tehran and Bonn would inevitably have negative repercussions for Iran's relations with the, as a whole as member states are required to show solidarity in such cases.

The new blot on relations comes as Mr. Khatami's government was pressing for relations to resume on a new footing after a 10-month interruption.

Last April a German court accused "the highest pinnacle of the Iranian state" of involvement in the assassination of four Iranian Kurdish opposition leaders in the Mykonos restaurant in Berlin in 1992.

Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi told Iranian radio Saturday the new government "excluded" a resumption of the "critical dialogue" broken off following the court's ruling last April and wanted future ties to be based on "mutual respect."

Mr. Kharazi met French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine in Geneva Thursday and was due to meet Italian Foreign Minister Lamberto Dini Saturday.

The policy of "critical dialogue" was launched by the Europeans in 1992 to reflect among other things Iran's failure to lift the death sentence the late Iranian leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini imposed on British writer Salman Rushdie for his book "The Satanic Verses."

The policy allows trade except for arms sales, but discourages high-ranking official visits. EU foreign ministers had been due to meet on Feb. 23 to consider a resumption of the dialogue to reflect the EU's support for the new political dispensation in Iran following Mr. Khatami's coming to power last August.

"The government incriminated by the German court last April has changed," said a European diplomat posted in Tehran.

The supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, is still there, but the president, foreign minister and intelligence minister implicated are no longer in office.

"A policy of isolation would be counterproductive" following Mr. Khatami's election, British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, the current chairman of EU foreign ministers, said last Monday.

## Clinton popularity at all-time high despite scandal — poll

WASHINGTON (AFP) — A CNN/Time magazine poll released late Friday shows President Bill Clinton's approval rating has risen to an all-time high despite allegations he had sex with a White House intern and then pressured her to lie about it.

Sixty-eight per cent of the 1,016 people polled approved Mr. Clinton's job performance, a high for the president and equivalent to the highest ratings of President Ronald Reagan, considered the benchmark of popularity among recent presidents.

The high ratings come despite poll results showing that half of those surveyed believed that Mr. Clinton had an affair with intern Monica Lewinsky.

"Clinton's approval rating has grown by a remarkable 16 points in the past week, and his favourable rating has rebounded to precisely where it was before the allegations

Lewinsky first surfaced," Cable News Network (CNN) reported.

The favourable ratings were likely influenced by the positive feeling most people in the United States had about the growing economy, CNN said.

Mr. Clinton has emphatically denied having had an affair with Ms. Lewinsky, who was secretly recorded talking to a friend about their alleged sexual relationship.

Independent counsel Kenneth Starr, who is investigating executive improprieties, was given low marks: 60 per cent of those surveyed believed Mr. Starr had gone too far in investigating the president's sex life.

A good 57 per cent believed that the investigation into the Lewinsky allegations should be stopped.

A bit more than half of those surveyed — 53 per cent — believed that the Lewinsky affair was interfering with Mr. Clinton's duties as president.

There was an ominous undertone, however: 60 per cent of those surveyed believed he should resign from office if he lied under oath, and 66 per cent believed he should leave if he obstructed justice.

The results were similar to an ABC Television poll released Friday that found 68 per cent of those surveyed approved of the way Mr. Clinton was handling his job, up 11 points in one week.

The president's previous record in an ABC poll was 64 per cent in July.

An earlier NBC Television poll Thursday showed 73 per cent approval.

Some 58 per cent in the ABC poll said they believed Mr. Clinton had the honesty and integrity to serve as president, compared to 49 per cent a week ago.



## Spanish king's elder daughter expecting first child

MADRID (AFP) — Princess Elena, the elder daughter of King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia of Spain, is expecting her first baby in August, the palace announced Thursday. It will be the first grandchild for the Spanish monarchs, who, speaking at an exhibition in Barcelona, said they were "very happy" at the news and did not mind whether it was a boy or girl. Talking informally to reporters, the Spanish king said his daughter had kept her promise not to make him a grandfather before his 60th birthday, which was on Jan. 5.

## Schumacher's voice helps end fan's coma

MADONNA DI CAMPILIO (R) — A recording of the voice of Michael Schumacher has helped a devoted Italian fan emerge from a coma. But Schumacher was reluctant to claim credit, saying: "In general terms it helped the parents. It gave them a sense of hope during a difficult time, so it was a good thing." Schumacher had sent a taped message to the parents of the 24-year-old man, identified only as Sandro. He had lapsed into a coma after a car crash in March last year. After several weeks of repeated playing, Sandro emerged from the coma.

## Singer Toni Braxton seeks protection from bankruptcy

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Grammy-winning rhythm and blues singer Toni Braxton filed for bankruptcy protection to allow her to "make a fresh start," her publicist said. Braxton filed for Chapter 7 under the U.S. Bankruptcy Code that allows her some measure of protection from creditors to allow her to reorganise her finances. "Given the financial crises in which she has found herself, she felt she had no choice," said her publicist Allan Mayer of her filing. "Needless to say, this discovery came as a shock to her, particularly since she has never led an extravagant life," he said.

## Gates' home still has bugs to iron out

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The posh mansion built for Microsoft boss Bill Gates, the world's richest individual, still apparently has some bugs to be ironed out. "I brought up a big screen in my bedroom and for some reason the system stopped working," Gates told ABC. "It was just sitting there shining. And I wanted to go to sleep. So finally I had to get a blanket and put it over the screen." The home in Medina, Washington, took seven years to build, and features a 20-seat theatre, a pool with underwater music, its own pier, a 20-car underground garage, an indoor spa, a 100-visitor reception hall and a \$1.4 million caretaker's residence.

## Warhol's 'Orange Marilyn' on block in May

NEW YORK (AFP) — "Orange Marilyn," one of pop artist Andy Warhol's most famous works, will be on sale during an auction of contemporary paintings May 14, Sotheby's said Friday. The Warhol painting is part of a series of five portraits of the screen legend on red, orange, pale blue, dark blue and turquoise backgrounds. "Orange Marilyn" reportedly took a stray bullet during an attempt on Warhol's life in 1968. But Sotheby's says it has found no trace of gunfire. "Shot Red Marilyn" was sold at Christie's in New York for \$4.01 million in 1991 and \$3.6 million in 1994.

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